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A GIRL OF THE MULTITUDE

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A GIRL OF THE MULTITUDE

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE LETTERS OF HER
MOTHER TO ELIZABETH"

COLONIAL EDITION

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INTRODUCTION



THE character of the extraordinary girl of the people, known as Eglée, has been hastily limned by the Comte de Beugnot in his Memoirs. The portrait, imperfect as it is, has a value for the student of human nature apart from its association with an event that must be forever memorable. Its inconsistency, its perplexity, its subversion of formula, attest the completeness of that momentous thing called the Great French Revolution, for the protest of Anarchy against itself is the most striking evidence of an anarchic state of things. The organised attack on convention however terrible, if successful, becomes in turn a convention, but it is in the vortex of the whirlpool, that the true chaos of the ocean is to be found. The present narrative is in no sense an attempt to excuse the character of the girl whom the Comte de Beugnot met in the Conciergerie; at the most it is an example of the growth of seed in stony ground.

INTRODUCTION

Much that is astonishing has been produced by the Faubourg St. Antoine ; where the dregs of the people settle, much that is astonishing will always be found. In this dreaded quarter of Paris the germs of revolution have always existed. The Citizen King and the Plebescite Emperor recognised both its hidden menace and its open danger, and they successively passed the plough of modern improvement over it. Broad asphalt boulevards have extinguished the old network of dirty alleys, the cobbles of whose pavements when occasion required served as the barricades of insurrection, and new and clean houses with long, white ashlar façades have taken the place of the stone latrines in which since the days of St. Louis crime, vice, and ignorance festered. The face of the Faubourg has changed but its heart is still the same, for the heart of the people never changes. Whether clad in the old rags or in the new-fangled pantaloon costume, the Faubourg is always formidable. In 1870 it spoke and acted as in 1793, nor is it even now in the article of death.

The study of the people is to be learnt only among the people. It is there that human nature is to be found in all its multifarious phases ; that which seems incongruous, impossible to the First Estate is a naked fact to the proletariat, and human nature is very wonderful and unaccountable when it has never worn the mask of convention.

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PART I

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1788

CHAPTER I

THE MASKED BALL

THE stamp of the people was on her from the crown of her head to the soles of her feet. Born in an attic of the Faubourg St. Antoine, she had passed the fifteen years of her life in the slums on which, in the year 1788, the shadow of the Bastille still fell. No baptismal register recorded her name; but she answered to that of Eglée, which in the *argot* of the quarter meant Brightness, and was probably suggested by the general liveliness and merriment of her disposition. She preserved no recollection of her parents, nor did she know whether they were alive or dead. And she did not care. When she was a mere greasy, tousled infant just able to toddle about the passages and stairs of a crazy tenement that lodged a dozen families her mother disappeared. Madame Laforge, who washed the clothes of the quarter, had

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on her weekly rounds found her sitting on the floor of an empty attic, gleefully pulling the hairs out of a mangy cat's tail. At sight of the washerwoman the child toddled up to her affectionately and in answer to all questions had only a smile. It was by no means the first time in Madame Laforge's experience that she had come upon an abandoned infant; but this was the first time she ever felt it incumbent on her to succour one. Her compassion was aroused and she took the child away with her; she never regretted her act of charity, and in time her generosity was amply repaid by the willing assistance rendered her by the foundling.

In the Rue Fromenteau, where Madame Laforge lived, morals were a thing unknown. Down there vice and ignorance fattened on the dregs of the people like reptiles on the filth of an oubliette. In due course Eglée's insignificant career was stamped by the eighteen-year-old son of her foster-mother with the usual seal of those born and bred in slums. But important as the incident was as marking the stepping-stone from childhood to womanhood, it could hardly be said to have coloured her life, which continued uneventful as before. The first event of real importance to her was the departure from the Faubourg of Jean, who had been in turn

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her foster-brother, playmate, and lover. Indirectly it attracted her attention to a higher sphere than that in which she was born, and for the first time in her fifteen years she was conscious of a curiosity to explore the world that lay beyond the shadow of the Bastille—that world for which the men and women of the Faubourg had so great a hatred and fear—that world into which the companion of her childhood had gone.

Ever since the day that one Goureaux, who had formerly lived in the Rue Fromenteau, and was now coachman-in-chief to Monseigneur the Duc d'Amboise, had come to see Madame Laforge, in all the glory of the d'Amboise plush and powder, the imagination of the child had been excited. Hitherto her ideas of those who dwelt out of the Faubourg were grotesque and she thought of them vaguely as terrifying monsters, for in her refractory infancy Madame Laforge's most efficacious threat of punishment was, "If you give me any more trouble I will send you to the Bastille, where the aristocrats will devour you !"

The impression Goureaux left behind him was not easily effaced ; Eglée thought of him with wonder and admiration, but he fired Jean's youthful ambition, and the boy, who had hitherto loafed about the quarter

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amusing himself with all the idle evil it contained, now became restless and longed for fine clothes and the grand air of Goureaux. He was ever picturing himself strutting about the Faubourg in the insignia of the same haughty peer of France as the coachman, and at last, through the medium of the imposing Goureaux, he entered the ducal service as lackey. Such evil as he had not previously gleaned in the Faubourg he now rapidly learned from the *valletaille* of the Hôtel d'Amboise, where idleness, sumptuous living, and the example of the gay world made him an apt pupil. His mother, to whom the French language either printed or written was a cipher to which she had no key, had aspired for her son more advantages than she herself possessed; he had been taught to read and write, accomplishments which Elgée too had acquired at the same time. And a voraciously devoured copy of the "Adventures of the Chevalier de Faublas," held in great esteem in the lackey world, completed his education.

Whenever he got a chance he delighted to visit the Rue Fromenteau on account of the stir he made in his gorgeous livery. His elevation was so recent that his first love had not yet lost its charm, and it flattered his vanity to enlighten Eglée of the doings of the great world in which he lived and of which she knew

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nothing, while she listened to all he told her with the profoundest interest.

Once, as if to dazzle her with his heightened importance, he promised to take her to one of the public balls at the Opera, where in mask and domino the highest and the lowest mixed. The promise idly uttered he was slow in keeping, for he feared the ridicule of his fellow-servants if it were known that he kept company with one so mean as Eglée. But even at fifteen the girl evinced something of the masterful personality which was afterwards to be so strikingly developed, and she kept her vain and weak lover to his promise willy-nilly. A pair of glorious eyes and an equally glorious voice, a frank and unbounded admiration for the lackey, and a great deal of persistency, accomplished Eglée's keen desire. This event so insignificant in itself was of the utmost interest to the girl; it coloured her dull life, and its after-effect on her was exceedingly momentous. It marked her acquaintance with the world beyond her Faubourg, it was the mould in which her unformed character was to harden, it stirred her to the depths. It was Fate's summons, if she had known it, to appear in the wonderful drama of life and to play such a *rôle* as she could—in a word, the fulfilment of this rashly uttered promise of Jean was Eglée's awakening.

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A date having at last been fixed it was arranged that she should call at the porter's lodge of the Hôtel d'Amboise for Jean, who would be on the look out for her, and together they would go to the long anticipated ball. This was more easily said than done. Beyond the precincts of the Faubourg St. Antoine Paris was but slightly known to Eglée, and the other bank of the Seine, where the Faubourg St. Germain spread itself in stately and sombre magnificence, was a veritable *terra incognita*. She speedily lost her way, and some men, whom she asked to direct her to the Hôtel d'Amboise, out of wanton mischief, purposely put her on the wrong track.

Towards midnight Jean was on the point of giving up the hope of seeing her and going by himself to the ball. For the last two hours he had been off duty, and it was decidedly exasperating to waste such precious time in vain expectation. Again and again he opened the porter's gate and looked out eagerly. The stately Rue de Lille, in which the Hôtel d'Amboise and many other grand houses stood, was empty, and out of the dark sky a cold drizzle was falling. For him it was a cheerless and lonely waiting, and he muttered a malediction when he looked towards the Rue du Bac, where in a flood of light there continually passed foot-passengers, sedan-chairs and coaches.

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"For the crown of the king," he exclaimed to himself at last, "I'll not wait here any longer. Women are the very devil for teasing a man; they are all alike, whether it's old Madame la Duchesse inside there who is never without a text in her mouth, or Eglée who makes a grand fellow like me stand shivering in the cold because she has the sweetest eyes and voice in the world."

The elegant lackey sighed and stood irresolutely half in and half out of the porter's gate; he would wait till the stroke of midnight, and then with the fair Eglée or without her he would speed to the Opera, which meant to him all the adventures of Faublas rolled into one. His impatient reverie was just then broken by the prancing of horses' hoofs on the cobble-paved courtyard of the Hôtel d'Amboise; he heard the heavy bolts of the great entrance gate clang back and a coach rumbled out beneath the sculptured portal into the Rue de Lille, dazzling him with its lights as it passed.

"My faith! what a beautiful, beautiful gentleman! Tell me, Jean, who was that? Ah, but these aristocrats smell sweet! He shook out a tiny handkerchief made of lace and you couldn't see his fingers for the rings. I took him all in, from his peruke to his—his—to the middle of his waistcoat, I couldn't see any

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further. And now kiss me, Jean, and tell me who that beautiful aristocrat was."

The lackey rubbed the glare of the coach lamps out of his eyes and, forgetting all his impatience, threw his arms rapturously round the speaker.

"Ah, Eglée, Eglée, you have nearly broken my heart; do you know how long you have kept me here? Little of the ball we shall see, and I have to be back here at five to light your beautiful, cursed aristocrat to his bed; and perhaps too he may not come. He says he would rather sleep in any bed but his own. Come, we've no time to waste, let us be off."

"So that was your master, Jean? Ah, how I should love to serve him! I hate the filthy brutes in our Faubourg!" And the girl stamped her feet with the memory of something that revolted her.

"Yes, that was Monseigneur the Duc d'Amboise, and may the devil take him in the flower of his youth!"

Jean kissed her again on both cheeks, and hastily picking up a bundle that was lying somewhere in the darkness by the gate he stepped out into the street.

"Come," he added hilariously, noticing that his companion carried a similar bundle under her arm, "let us go quickly. Who knows, my beauty, you may dance with him to-night. These aristocrats are a queer lot, they go to the people's balls; and in dominoes and

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masks how can the Duc d'Amboise tell you from the queen ? ”

And the two, hugging their bundles, which contained their disguises, walked rapidly down the Rue de Lille and took the shortest way to the Opera.

The volatile lackey had completely forgotten his vexation till Eglée suddenly sat down on the steps of a church they passed and exclaimed—

“I must rest my legs a bit, indeed I must. I am dead tired. Do you know, Jean, I have been looking for you and the Rue de Lille since sunset—walking, walking, walking, and nothing to eat ? It wasn't my fault, Jean, don't scold me ; remember I have never been out of the Faubourg but once before, and that was when we went to see the Montgolfier go up in the air in the Tuileries Gardens. Do you remember it, Jean ? We were children then. And to-night it was so dark and wet—just feel my clothes how damp they are—and when I got to the corner of the Rue St. Antoine I took the wrong turning, then I lost myself and couldn't find the river for ever so long, and the people I asked were all devils and told me the wrong way. I wish they could fall into Legendre's abattoir where nothing comes out alive—the brutes ! But I found you at last, dear, I would have walked all night but I would have found you. Oh, I am so tired and sleepy ! ”

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Eglée having delivered herself of this speech in a rapid, caressing manner, yawned loudly. But Jean had no intention of wasting any more of the valuable night in permitting the tired child to rest, and with a great deal of impatience he forced her to get up and follow him.

"You can sit down at the Opéra as much as you like, Eglée," he said, "but we might as well give up the ball if you are going to spend the whole night on these steps. Besides, it is cold and wet here, and only people of the damned Faubourg loaf about on church steps. It's vulgar ; come, get up."

Eglée rose with another yawn and obediently followed her inconsiderate lover, chatting volubly as she went in spite of her weariness. The Duc d'Amboise was the chief topic of her remarks ; he was the first aristocrat she had ever seen, and the sudden glittering flash of him as he rolled by her in his grandeur had made an impression on her susceptible child's mind. It was, too, a subject dear to Jean's heart, for he was fast becoming the typical lackey who likes to discuss his master and to display the extent of his critical observations in the usual servile and contemptuous manner. So they covered the remainder of the way pleasantly enough until they entered the Place du Palais Royal, where an enormous crowd was

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a-jostle in noisy confusion. A building ablaze with the light of innumerable candles, before whose spacious portal coaches were depositing mysterious figures, signified to Eglée that at last she had reached the long anticipated ball. Suddenly she stopped and uttered a vile oath common to the inhabitants of the Faubourg St. Antoine.

“Jean, Jean, I knew I should forget something. See, I can’t go in, I have no shoes. I can’t dance in *these!*” And she clattered her sabots on the pavement and raised her face to Jean’s with an expression of dismay.

It was now Jean’s turn to utter an oath, which he delivered himself of with great ease and vigour, and as he glanced for the first time critically at his mistress he realised what a thoroughly shabby and disreputable little creature she was, and he looked around to see if there was any one in the noisy crowd who recognised him. Eglée’s finery was both flashy and tawdry, a medley of odds and ends, on the selection of which at an old clothes’ shop in the Faubourg she had expended an infinite amount of care and vanity. In the haste and excitement with which she had dressed she had quite forgotten such things as shoes and stockings, nor had she made any provision for them, for never having possessed them their necessity had

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never occurred to her till now. Her ablutions that day had been very thorough, and she looked what she was—a child of the people in holiday attire, minus the grime. The sudden idea of the incompleteness of her costume of which she was so proud made her blush with mortification. She felt that she was an object of ridicule, and believing that she would not be admitted to the ball, her offended vanity and disappointment culminated in tears.

But by nature Jean was too good-humoured for his anger to last long, and, with more common sense and imagination than one would have credited to so shallow a fellow, he said reassuringly—

“Quick, put on your domino and mask and we will go to the *pâtisserie* over there and see if we can raise a pair of shoes.” And while he spoke he put on his own disguise.

Eglée clapped her hands with childish glee, and in the twinkling of an eye she donned her mask and covered her shabby and now quite wet finery with her domino.

“Don’t you say a word ; leave all the talking to me,” said Jean as they entered the *pâtisserie*.

The only occupant of the shop was a very fat, good-natured-looking woman who was knitting behind a counter on which were all the triumphs of the pastry-cook’s art.

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"Sit down, Marquise," said Jean to Eglée in a loud voice and swaggering manner, which was his idea of imitating great folk.

Eglée full of wonder sat down on a three-legged stool. The woman behind the counter put aside her knitting and exclaimed politely, "What is it I can do for Monsieur?"

Jean swaggered to the counter and upset a dish of macaroons on the floor with the sleeve of his domino.

"Madame la Marquise there had the whim to go to the ball to-night in the costume of a girl of the Faubourg St. Antoine, but forgot that one cannot dance in sabots; will it be possible for you to oblige her with the loan of a pair of shoes? Perhaps even an old pair will serve."

He spoke with an assumption of haughty assurance; but the woman was not so easily taken in; she replied, with a laugh—

"Madame la Marquise has studied the people to perfection, for if the detail of her dress which I cannot see is as complete as the sabots would indicate, no less studied is her manner of sitting. I compliment Madame on her success; she has the true air of the people."

Jean glanced at Eglée and uttered an exclamation not often heard in the mouths of aristocrats, at least

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when in the company of ladies. Eglée was sitting astride the stool in an attitude unmistakably vulgar and natural. The woman evidently had a sense of humour and she was also flattered with the success of her perspicacity. With ironical emphasis she added good-naturedly—

“Monsieur le valet de chambre, when you have seen as much of aristocrats as I have, you will be able to tell them under any mask or domino. If you wish to make people believe that you and your friend are aristocrats go to the Faubourg St. Antoine where the people are blind and fools. But I don't bear malice, and when Monseigneur has paid for the dish he has broken, I daresay I can sell him an old pair of slippers for Madame la Marquise.”

In great discomfiture Jean pulled off his mask and stammered an awkward apology. He had a solitary sou in his waistcoat pocket and to get it he had to unbutton his domino, and he stood before the woman a very shamefaced lackey. She laughed again loudly; her fat body shook all over, and her broad and flabby expanse of chest quivered like a blanc mange.

She laughed till her eyes completely disappeared in her fat face and till the tears seemed to gush from the wrinkles, she laughed till her breath came in

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spasms and her laugh changed to a gurgle that threatened to choke her. Suddenly with a great sigh she stopped and pointed with a finger first to Eglée, who still sat in the same position, too frightened to move, and then to Jean, exclaiming with a great wheeze, "Madame la Marquise! An aristocrat with one sou!" and began again with renewed vigour. At last she stopped and, picking up the broken dish and the scattered macaroons, said, "Keep your copper, boy, and study your master better." Then she disappeared into the back of the shop, whence she produced two very shabby pink satin slippers. "You are welcome to these, girl. I don't want to spoil your fun, I was fond of balls myself once." And she handed the slippers across the counter to the astonished lackey.

They were much too large for Eglée; still they were better than the impossible sabots, which were rapidly discarded, and with the profoundest and most servile thanks the two hurried out of the shop. The woman did not hear, the sight of Eglée in the slippers that were too big for her had provoked another fit of laughter. But whether it was a keen sense of humour or satisfaction at her own astuteness that caused such extravagant merriment, neither Jean nor Eglée speculated. Glad to escape on such easy terms, they hurried towards the Opera, the one humiliated and the other

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frightened, and they did not regain their composure till all other thoughts were driven from their minds by the contemplation of the brilliant and marvellous scene around them.

In a great press of people they entered the vast ball-room of the Opera and stood arm-in-arm in a colonnade beneath the first tier of boxes. To Jean, who had already been several times to these balls, the fascinating scene had lost none of its novelty, and in a state of great exhilaration he watched the ceaseless, kaleidoscopic movements around him. But to Eglée, who had only once before in her young life been beyond the limits of the Faubourg St. Antoine, and that was to see Montgolfier's balloon ascend from the Tuileries Garden, the scene she looked upon through the slits of eyes of her mask was bewildering. The arm that rested on her lover's trembled. The great crystal chandeliers with their thousand upon thousand of candles dazzled her; the vastness of the Opera staggered her; the incessant movements of the mysterious dancers made her dizzy; the loud, rhythmic strains of the orchestra crashing on the perpetual buzz of the voices deafened her. It was all too much to take in at once; added to the bodily fatigue of her long search for Jean it made her sleepy and she yawned loudly.

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"What do you think of this, little one?" whispered Jean caressingly. "It's better than a bare-foot car-magnole in the gutters of the Rue Fromenteau, isn't it? This is the world for me, this is life; down there in the Faubourg is hell. Bah!"

Eglée struggled heroically against her sleepiness; she was conscious of a vague pleasure in it all, and an abnormal sense of the importance and goodness of Jean that filled her with deep gratitude.

"I love you, Jean," was all she could say, but the tone was such that her lover intuitively guessed what she felt. He remembered his own sensations of a first ball at the Opera.

"Look up at the boxes, Eglée, they are full of aristocrats. Nobody knows who is who. See the jewels on that woman, you may depend they are worth more than the face she hides under her mask. Cursed pigs! for all their manners and paint and clothes they are the same flesh and blood as we are. I hate them but I like the life they lead."

Jean explained to his companion other attractions of the ball worthy of equal notice. His glance, however, always came back to the boxes where the aristocrats sat incognito, and he thought of Faublas and the intrigues of the high with the low. In spite of his contempt of aristocrats that he had acquired in

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the Faubourg St. Antoine, there was in him too a sneaking admiration for them that he did not own to himself, acquired at the Hôtel d'Amboise. But Jean's esteem was without respect—*that* sentiment had long ceased to exist anywhere in France ; it was an esteem compounded of envy and hatred that a few years hence was exasperated throughout the Third Estate into a mania at the mere sound of the word aristocrat. Suddenly he whispered to Eglée—

“Do you see that man in a black satin mask in the fourth box from the end of the first tier? See, his domino is unbuttoned and you can see the pink satin and lace of his coat. I'll swear that's the Duc d'Amboise ; look at the way he moves his head and leans forward—why, I could tell him among a hundred. I wonder who that woman is he is talking to, the one with the diamonds and the black velvet mask? One of his mistresses, I'll swear. He is only my age, Eglée—not twenty-one yet—and he is one of the biggest rakes in France. He is so damned handsome, and richer than a prince of the blood, curse his pretty face! Come, dear, let's try a dance.” And putting an arm round Eglée's waist Jean whirled her into the very thick of the throng.

Eglée only knew how to dance in the style of the Faubourg St. Antoine, nor had Jean acquired a more

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refined and courtly mode. They interfered with the even swing of the dancers ; they bumped rudely into people and were buffeted back against others ; there was no space for them to spread themselves after the manner of the people ; twice Eglée's slippers came off and were almost lost in the human whirlpool. All around them was confusion where they had knocked the dancers out of step ; masks were turned angrily towards them, and now and then curses were muttered at them. To stop was to be knocked down, to get out of the crowd was to throw half the room into confusion ; they might be ejected for interfering with the regularity of the dancing.

"Let us try once more to dance out of this, little one. If these aristocrats who come to the people's balls would only dance like the people, there would be none of this trouble. Here's a clear space, now let us make a dash for it."

They twirled round awkwardly, edging towards the outer ring of the dancers, when they lurched heavily and unexpectedly into a couple with such force as to throw Eglée off her feet. In her fall the shabby pink slippers came off, and before she could rescue them they were kicked out of sight by a score of feet, irretrievably lost. She rose in dismay, clinging to Jean with a face reddened with shame under her mask, and

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stood barefoot in the midst of the ball-room. But if she had lost her slippers the couple into whom she had bumped had also suffered.

The lady had lost her mask and was full of discomfiture and rage that filled her eyes with angry tears.

"Take me out of this at once," she cried imperiously to her companion. "Oh, if I should be recognised—the scandal, the shame of it; another advantage to my enemies!"

The figure to whom she addressed herself took off his mask while she spoke and handed it to her, disclosing to Eglée's fascinated gaze the handsome features of the young Duc d' Amboise. The lady quickly put on the mask, but not before she had been recognised.

"The queen! the queen! Marie Antoinette!" exclaimed a dozen voices, and to catch a glimpse of her all around her the dancing ceased.

"Make way! make way!" cried the aristocrat in a voice of command, forcing a passage through the curious crowd, which with difficulty permitted him and the imprudent queen to pass.

The whole incident had only taken a few seconds; the queen had been recognised and disappeared almost in the same moment. But throughout the Opera,

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and the next day throughout Versailles and Paris, even down into the Faubourg St. Antoine, the rumour with its satellite exaggeration spread, that the Queen of France had been seen dancing at an Opera ball in domino and mask. One more imprudence born of thoughtlessness and frivolity was added to the weapons of her enemies, and the wound it was to inflict was reserved for the hour of her utter humiliation.

In the confusion Jean and Eglée had escaped to a position in which they could once more stand quietly. Nobody in that great crowd noticed that Eglée was barefoot, she herself had forgotten it. She made no effort to talk to Jean, her thoughts were too perplexed for expression ; and Jean, quite unmindful of her, sharply scanned with the eye of a detective every box in the Opera to see if he could discover the dominoes of the queen and his master. In the squalor, the dire poverty, the coarse brutality of the Faubourg St. Antoine in which she had been born and bred, it had never crossed Eglée's mind that there could be such a condition of life as this. As far back as she could remember, king, queen, and aristocrats were associated in her mind with the Bastille, the hatred and fear of which was inherited through long generations of the people. She had heard it said in the Faubourg that the king and queen and aristocrats exacted with

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terrible threats all the money of the people which was so hard to earn ; and she had in her childish ignorance got to think of them as monsters who drank blood ; had she heard they were come to the Faubourg she would surely have run and hidden herself. But when Jean went to be lackey to an aristocrat and came back to see her, looking so handsome in his fine clothes and with marvellous tales of the aristocrat world in which he lived, Eglee's interest was excited. She wondered what manner of people were these who with their Bastille could make even the burly Santerre shudder and at the same time fill Jean with admiration. Now for the first time her insatiable curiosity was being satisfied and she was speechless with wonder. She had never shared the implacable hatred of the Faubourg, for her childish imagination had not grasped its meaning ; fear alone was strong in her—fear of the mysterious monsters whom she heard cursed every day. But now at a blow all her preconceived ideas were shattered. It staggered her. How beautiful was her vision of the Duc d'Amboise, he was unlike any one she had ever imagined ! Were all aristocrats like him ? Then why did the Faubourg curse them ? And that woman with the tears of rage in her eyes was the Queen of France, the dreaded Austrian who lived on the blood and the money of the

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people! The Queen of France! and she, Eglée, had actually *touched* her! The surprise of it was overpowering. And what was therein the expression of that proud, lovely, never-to-be-forgotten royal face that drew Eglée's heart out of her and made her thrill for days after at the mention of the name of Marie Antoinette? The discovery that the aristocrat world was different from what she and the Faubourg had always thought was bewildering, it was more than her brain could stand. It seemed to her that she had never been so weary in her life, and squeezing Jean's arm to attract his attention she said peevishly—

"I am so tired—so tired. See, I have lost the slippers. Do let me go, Jean; think how far I have to walk."

Jean, too, was quite ready to go. After what had happened it was better to slip away. Suppose the Duc d'Amboise should find out who had been the cause of the queen's mishap? He shuddered; it would be as much as his place—nay, his life—was worth.

"Come," he said, "I have had enough." And soon they were in the broad space in front of the Opera in a wet fog.

To escort his young mistress to her abode in the Faubourg St. Antoine was not at all to Jean's mind. Eglée must find her way back as best she could. He merely pointed out the direction in which she was to

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go. Outside in the open air they took off their masks and dominoes. Eglée looked very tired and disreputable, and Jean laughed at the sight of her.

"If they had known what you were like under your disguise they would never have let you in, but that's the fun of these balls. What did you think of the masks? Fine sight, wasn't it, little one? And we bumped into the Queen of France! Oh, là, là! You do look tired, my heart. Good-night, and *au revoir*. Turn to your left when you get to the corner there, and then ask your way."

And the light, selfish youth kissed her and tripped rapidly off.

Eglée watched him with a sigh as he went across the wet square in whose shining puddles the lights of the Opera danced. When he disappeared she splashed off in the direction of the Faubourg, but at once lost herself in a tangle of dark and crooked streets. There were few passers-by at that hour, and those she accosted did not deign to notice such a waif of the gutters. The unusual exercise and excitement had completely exhausted her, and she made up her mind to pass the rest of the night in the first dry and sheltered place she found.

In her search she wandered into the Place Vendôme, where a hubbub attracted her towards a little crowd

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gathered round the great equestrian statue of Louis XIV. A coach was canted over on the end of its rear axletree, from which the wheel had been wrenched, and two spirited horses were kicking the varnished dashboard to splinters and quite beyond the control of a fat, grandly liveried coachman who was standing at their heads vainly trying to calm them. Two women and a man, the occupants of the over-turned coach, and beyond question aristocrats, stood a little back from the crowd that had gathered and leaned against the pedestal of the statue, which seemed monstrously large in the foggy darkness. One of the women wore a black satin mask as if she wished to escape recognition. Her cloak, which was of a very rich material, was open, and round her throat glittered a magnificent necklet of diamonds, while the corsage of her dress, which her cloak only half hid, was ablaze with jewels.

Eglée's eyes rested on her in fascination ; tired as she was her curiosity was excited, and she stopped in the crowd. The masked lady's companions stood in front of her as if to shelter her from observation, and were laughing lightly and treating the mishap as a joke. In a few minutes a *fiacre*, that a lackey had been sent in search of, came rumbling up over the pavement, and the three got into it hurriedly. And as Eglée

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watched it roll away she heard somebody exclaim contemptuously—

“The Polignacs ! • A thousand livres that mask was the Austrian ! ”

There was a murmur of surprise in the crowd and the fat coachman was beset with questions. He declared he knew not whom he was driving, for he wore the livery of the Count Fersen, and his master himself had bidden him drive three masked people to the Hôtel de Crillon. But his story was not believed, and the mob, whom the execrated name of Polignac had infuriated, smashed the coach to pieces and chased the coachman and horses away with curses.

Eglée paid no heed to the brawl ; with the departure of the aristocrats her curiosity subsided, and she cared not in the least whether it was Polignac's or Fersen's coachman. She walked across the Place Vendôme yawning, and in a dry corner of the colonnade the tired child stretched herself and slept.

CHAPTER II

AT TRIANON

SINCE the night of the masked ball Eglée's thoughts ever wandered romantically beyond the limits of her Faubourg, and on the slightest pretext her feet carried her into the heart of the Paris of the rich. She no longer thought of aristocrats with fear, for she had seen them at close quarters and found them wondrously fair to look upon. And there grew up in her mind a great contempt for the men and women of the Faubourg. She ceased to consider their opinions worthy of any respect, who were they in their filth and poverty to preach of their rights? Rights indeed, what could such as they know of rights? And curses, too, who were they to curse? To be cursed rather, she could understand that; and once hearing some women of the Rue Fromenteau vilifying the Queen of France, she exclaimed—

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“Canaille ! you lie, you don’t know what you are talking of. Have you ever seen the queen ? No. But I have. You know nothing of her. She is beautiful—oh, so beautiful. Ah, I know now why the Bastille was built. Pity they didn’t build it bigger so that they could lock up the whole lying Faubourg !”

And Eglée had flouted the women after the manner of her kind. Save for a shrill curse and a laugh of contempt they paid no heed. Who, indeed, was Eglée that her words should have any authority ?

The primitive natures of the young of the lowest people are peculiarly susceptible to impressions ; their instincts, unhampered by the conventions of civilisation, are keenly alert and powerful. By chance in the rude soil of Eglée’s heart a seed had fallen—a seed of the Beautiful. Eglée’s mere glimpse of the aristocrat world was a revelation to her, and with spontaneous childishness she conceived for it an unbounded admiration. Moreover, she had no vague, unsatisfied yearning after a place in that higher world, no ambitious envy of it, no discontent for her own sphere ; such sensations belong to those nearer the dazzling firmament, and Eglée no more longed for the life of aristocrats than for the moon. To her one was quite as impracticable as the other.

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So she developed into a partisan of aristocrats, and took the greatest interest in their doings, vociferously proclaiming it throughout the Faubourg St. Antoine. People only laughed at her; it was a joke to hear such a little gutter-sweep champion any cause, and Madame Laforge's neighbours delighted to tease the child for the fun of hearing her defend the queen. They never got angry, though Eglée invariably did; for, apart from her politics, she was willing, useful, and good-natured. Her temperament was naturally gay; as she had never had any possessions she had no worries, and she was of so little consequence that she had no enemies. In her poor, ignorant little way she was as happy as the day was long; her sins, which beyond doubt were grievous, were unconscious ones; her conscience did not prick her, her mind was untroubled. And this happy state of contentment, which was the outcome of perfect health and ignorance, was now vividly coloured by her imagination. She created in her fancy a world only peopled with aristocrats and queens who were always extravagantly beautiful, and whose sole reason of existence was to dance at Opera balls.

In the excess of her gratitude to Jean Eglée proclaimed his importance and vast knowledge of the aristocrat world to all in the Faubourg, so that he began to be considered of some consequence, for Jean

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always brought news of the all-powerful Court in whose doings the Faubourg St. Antoine was intensely interested. Never before in French history had the *Œil-de-Bœuf* been so critically regarded as now ; never before had the "despotism tempered with epigrams" exhausted its resources ; of a surety tyranny must be dying when such specialists as Doctor Turgot, Doctor Calonne, and Doctor Necker were called in consultation one after the other and could do nothing. So the times were full of unrest, some great unknown event was imminent, and all classes of society, from the aristocrats to the Faubourg, were in suspense. Yes, the *Œil-de-Bœuf*, which was tyranny, which was the *ancien régime*, was dying, and all France was a-tremble, and hailed any who brought news from Versailles.

The notice that he excited was very flattering to Jean ; and one day, being more generously inclined than usual to his advertising mistress, he promised to take her to spend a day at Versailles, where she could see aristocrats galore. This promise Eglée ever relied on Jean's keeping, and she looked forward to its fulfilment as a poet to fame.

If on second thoughts Jean regretted his rashly spoken words chance gave him no loop-hole for excuse. The Duc d'Amboise was appointed to a high post at

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Court at about this time, and removed his entire establishment to Versailles. Some months passed before the lackey was seen again in the Faubourg, during which time Eglée heard nothing, saw nothing, of the gay world. But her thoughts were not idle, she continued to cherish her fantastic ideal of it and to wonder when Jean would come back to take her to see the palace of the king. He came, however, when she least expected him, and surprised her rinsing a tub in the gutter in front of his mother's. Eglée dried her hands hastily in her skirt and was about to throw her arms round him, but the dignity of Jean's appearance cooled the ardour of her greeting. Something told her that a public and violent exhibition of affection, however natural, was out of place, so she put her arms behind her back and demurely holding her face up to the lackey puckered her lips to receive his kiss.

"It's a dear, good Jean," she said, "a beautiful, aristocrat Jean. And it's nice to see you again, dear, after all the stinking louts of the Faubourg. How are the queen and the beautiful Duc d'Amboise and our friends down there? And when are you going to take me away for a day, Jean, as you promised? I've got some fine clothes, I can tell you, so you won't be ashamed of me—everything complete. Old Madame Gobel, who keeps the second-hand *teinturerie* in the

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Rue St. Antoine, has lent them to me. They once belonged to a Comtesse in the Rue Chaussée d'Antin. Oh no, you won't be ashamed of me, Jean."

It was a day long memorable to Eglée, this day of the coming of Jean. But not to her alone, for to Paris also the whole week in which the day fell was long memorable. Every morning a great orange-coloured sun rose into a cloudless sky turning it into a fiery furnace in whose stifling air Paris baked; and the canopy of every night was like a steaming blanket riddled with the flames of the stars. The squares, the gardens, the broad café-bordered thoroughfares were filled with parched, sullen beings who sprawled everywhere. Nowhere was the misery of that week more intolerable than in the Faubourg St. Antoine—the formidable Faubourg, where the microbes of revolution bred in the dregs of the people. From the attics and cellars of the narrow, breathless streets and alleys there crawled the wretches who hugged an inarticulate grievance that it took a thousand years to voice. Obscene, squalid wretches, hideous to look upon; sullen, vindictive wretches, whom starvation and oppression have driven murder-mad; horribly grotesque wretches, half-man, half-ape, whom decency and order have kenneled in a latrine. Silently and thickly they spread over the singed city, and wherever they rested

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they were like maggots bred by the appalling heat. There was a vague suggestion of death about them—the gloom, the repugnance, the horror of dissolution. But what they sought was not carrion, it was air.

Such streets as the Rue de Lille, where the long, high walls of the mansions of the noblesse cast a shade, were favourite resting-places of the suffocated horde. Squatting on the pavement in the shadow of the morose walls the denizens of the Faubourg looked in disfavour on the closed portals with their sculptured escutcheons. Here and there through the fluted railings of a massive iron gate they had vistas of gardens and fountains, of grass and green trees. Where were the possessors of these necessities become luxuries? Flown to the Paradise of Versailles, where amid the bosky pleasures of Trianon they thought neither of the heat that blistered Paris nor the *canaille*. Once again have the people in their need looked to their natural leaders, the Duces or Dukes, the Ablemen of their race. To find help, to find sympathy? To find only streets whose desolate grandeur is abandonment. Charming vistas lie behind iron-railed gates—vistas of hope unrealisable to a panting, abandoned people. But were the iron gates once broken!

In spite of the hot stench of the slums Eglée was fresh and happy. The extreme heat was to her only a

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trifling physical derangement of Nature, she was too strong and healthy to be susceptible to excessive changes of tempera^sure. But Jean, who since he had become an aristocrat's lackey was very elegant and fastidious, appeared thoroughly exhausted by his journey. He climbed wearily the crazy stairs of the tenement to his mother's room, and having carefully taken off his powdered peruke and plush coat threw himself limply at full length on the floor on a heap of unwashed clothes. The sweat made little gutters in the rouge on his cheeks, and he lay a long time panting and speechless ; it was easy to see that under all the vanity and affectation of his manner the would-be imitator of Faublas required a stronger constitution than he possessed to emulate the gay Chevalier's dissipations. It was soon noised that he had come to pay his mother a brief visit, and that evening he held quite a reception around Madame Laforge's wash-tubs of neighbours who dropped in to hear the latest gossip from the king's château at Versailles.

Jean's duties and a great distaste for the style of living in the Rue Fromenteau compelled him to return on the morrow. When he came he had no intention of taking Eglée back with him, but the charm the girl exercised on his weak nature was still powerful. She held him to his promise, and he had not the skill or

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the courage to refuse her when at daybreak, clad in her shabby and fantastic finery, she declared with decision her intention of accompanying him. The attention he had received in the Faubourg had so flattered his vanity that his self-sufficiency was at the moment quite equal to the ridicule of his fellow-servants, and he knew that by favouring Eglée he would still further increase his importance among his acquaintances in the Faubourg. And full of self-satisfaction and good-humour he set out with Eglée. She who had never before been away from Paris was full of childish excitement that anticipated the unknown sights in store for her in a whole world of aristocrats.

At the barriers of Paris they mounted a diligence bound for Versailles. Crossing the Seine the lumbering vehicle climbed the steep road that passes the Palace of St. Cloud ; the horses rested for a while on the summit, panting and steaming ; the sun was not yet visible, though the eastern horizon on which it was impossible to gaze announced that he was coming with unparalleled fury. In front stretched the road through the leafy forest ; behind lay Paris, the whole vast city in a glance, quivering in the already burning air. The surprise of the sight was immense to Eglée, it was her first knowledge of such a thing as a panorama. She clapped her hands

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with delight as she recognised the peaked turrets of the Temple and the vast domed roof of the Tuileries beyond which the slender spire of the Sainte Chapelle and the great towers of Nôtre Dame swam in the quivering blue sky ; while in the remote distance there loomed a huge, black mass that now stood out rugged in the air, now was dissipated into countless vibrations. Was it ? could it be ? Yes, of a surety it was the Bastille ! And almost at their feet flowed the Seine like a silver ribbon entwining gardens and parks bowered in a vivid green bosage.

Outside Paris the great heat was not unbearable ; there was a freshness in the leafy shade of the woods, a release from suffocation in the open country. Eglée was flushed with pleasure which filled her with tenderness, and throughout the romantic forest of St. Cloud she and Jean behaved themselves after the fashion of the people quite regardless of the other occupants of the diligence. It was Eglée's holiday and she intended to enjoy it. Her spirits infected Jean, and they went gay and volatile, with no thought of the morrow ; through the glades of St. Cloud ; through the sleepy little town of Sèvres that seemed to blink at them as they rolled along stirring up its hot, choking dust ; through blazing sun and great stretches of shade, down the long and straight Avenue

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de Versailles, almost to the gates of the king's château.

They alighted at a small café* frequented by the lackey class, and having appeased their hunger with an omelette, a yard of bread, and a bottle of red wine, Jean showed Eglée the vast and stately palace of their sovereign lord and master. Eglée gave a little gasp of wonder.

"There's nothing like it in Paris," she said.

"I should think not," said Jean, with sarcasm. "We are only the people there—canaille to be barricaded into our Faubourg, to be shot and hung on the gallows and starved. Here we are aristocrats, my dear, and that means all that's nice."

"I would rather live here than in Paris, Jean."

"So would I," said he.

"And are they all aristocrats inside that great building? Is it full of them?"

"There are less than Louis XV. had sins to confess, and more than the queen you are always talking of has virtues," he replied oracularly.

And producing his ticket of service to satisfy the Swiss Guard Jean led Eglée rapidly across the vast esplanade to that portion of the palace reserved for the servants of the household.

The Museum "À Toutes les Gloires de France,"

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that most of us have read about or visited, is to-day merely the embalmed corpse of the palace of the old kings. Its walls are but the shell of an extinct condition of life. It is hard to imagine that beings of flesh and blood like ourselves ever inhabited the great dreary rooms whose tarnished splendour seems so vulgar to us nowadays. Yet it was once the scene of a life of unparalleled magnificence in our modern Europe. Every room from the Gallery of Mirrors to the meanest lackey's bore the stamp of occupancy, for several thousand people used to sleep under the roof of His Most Christian Majesty. Throughout all its vastness there pulsed the breath of human life, gay or grave or tragic. It was a royal caravanserai. But like all earthly things life departed from it; that which had *made* the great building withered: its heart stopped beating and death spread throughout all its members on the day the poissardes took Louis XVI. to bake bread for them, as they said, at the Tuileries. From that day it has been the mausoleum of its own life.

As with all tombs the tooth of time has eaten into it. Indifference, or loveless care, has turned it into a museum, and the iconoclastic Republic has shorn it of the last vestige of its former splendour. It no longer stands in the stately isolation which made it so imposing. Tramways jingle under the very windows

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from which looked once the mightiest and loveliest of France. Hotels, cafés, shops, stables, all the paraphernalia of a life it once despised, have crept up to the very gates of the grand court of the esplanade and are gradually squeezing it into insignificance in their sordid embrace. Soon it will be but a shabby, rickety façade in the midst of practical, commercial buildings. A little while and it shall wholly disappear, every trace of it, as completely as its quondam grandeur.

But on the day when Eglée visited it the Palace of Versailles was in all the pride of its splendid life. The disease of death had not yet seized it.

The Duc d'Amboise had a house in the town whither his establishment had removed from Paris; but, like other great lords who held high positions round the persons of their Majesties, he lived chiefly at the palace, where Jean and some half-dozen of his people were also lodged. The chief of these, the steward of the Duc, Jean now sought in order to report his return, bringing Eglée with him into the room where some idle fellows sprawled in the d'Ambroise livery. He adroitly accounted for Eglée by following a patriarchal precedent for a like situation; and introducing her as his sister, whom he had brought with him from Paris to show the

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sights of Versailles, Jean begged the steward's leave to find a bed for her, in the palace for the night. Whether the story, which quite took Eglée's breath away, was believed or not, it was accepted and the permission for her lodgment granted.

"Now, Eglée, I'll show you the park," said Jean, and led the astonished girl through a labyrinth of rooms filled with the servants of the Court.

Here Eglée saw tall heyducs lounging idly on sofas, some of whom ogled her as she passed ; pages were playing dominoes ; women were gossiping and laughing. To her surprise Jean seemed to know very few of these people ; he explained that they were perhaps taken for new arrivals, for many of the servants were unknown to one another as there was a perpetual coming and going of Court folk, and coaches were continually rolling in and out of the great gates. In some rooms Eglée saw servants, that to her seemed as gorgeous as aristocrats, eating and drinking and smoking ; in others there were dogs and cats and monkeys and birds, pets of the Royal Family or of the aristocrats in the splendid rooms above where Eglée could not go. All windows and doors were open on account of the great heat, and Eglée heard strains of music far away. Now and then there was heard the heavy tramp of soldiers in the esplanade,

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and bugle-calls and the beating of drums mingled with the rumble of a coach over the cobbles. Through the door she caught a glimpse of a garden where all was green and fresh, and gaily dressed people were walking about on the terraces and looking into fountains. Everywhere there was life.

They came finally to a corridor which led to the garden, and as Eglée stood lost in speechless wonder at the grandeur and vastness of all she saw, the sound of voices and laughter came from an open window above them and a lady looked out.

"That is Madame Adelaide, one of the king's aunts," whispered Jean, drawing Eglée back from notice. The lady called a certain name once or twice in a coaxing voice and threw some crumbs from the window. And to Eglée's astonishment a magnificent feathered beast, such as she had never imagined existed, came up to peck the crumbs.

"Oh, Jean," the child exclaimed, "this is the happiest day of my life! It is all so beautiful, so wonderful! I am sure the aristocrats are good, it is only our Faubourg that doesn't know anything more than a louse, that curses them."

"Yes, it is very nice to be an aristocrat; I wouldn't exchange places with any man in the Faubourg, no, not even with Santerre, for all the money he makes

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out of his brewery. But I hate these aristocrats, Eglée, they are the same people as we are, all but the poverty. But the day is coming when we shall have our turn, we shall show them what it is to live like us. We are going to trample them underfoot just as they have trampled on us. Ah, I wonder how they are going to like that. I've heard the Comte d'Artois' horse-doctor, Monsieur Marat, speak here in the very palace, and he knows. Our time has come at last, he says ; for the Œil-de-Bœuf has fallen into its dotage, and the king and his ministers are fools. Yes, they are fine folk, these cursed aristocrats, but *we* made them so—the more fool we, I say. They have forgotten that down here, but we remember.”

He spoke with an air of conviction, but to Eglée his words were meaningless. She paid no heed to them. The aristocrat world as she saw it affected her senses with an indescribable pleasure. What did she care for politics, what did she know of liberty and the rights of the people ?

Jean's political reflections were cut short by her inability to understand them, and he felt a certain contempt for her at her lack of appreciation of the burning question and the childish delight she took in her day's outing.

“ Let us go into the park,” he said, “ it is cool

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under the trees." And turning into an *allée* bordered with a lofty boxwood hedge Jean led Eglée into the Park of Versailles.

He made the child, who was a slave to his slightest wish, sit down beside him on a grassy knoll in the shade of a great tree. It was better to make love than to get hot and angry over the cursed aristocrats. And they spent the better part of the afternoon in happy indolence and caresses, forgetful of all but themselves.

Nobody disturbed them, not even a coach passed in the broad and shaded avenue near by that led to the Little Trianon, whither they were going later to have a peep at the Court playing peasant. The whole world seemed asleep ; Jean said great folk never stirred out in the heat of the day. And, gradually overcome by the drowsy shade, they too slept, until a peal of merry laughter awoke them. Eglée rubbed her eyes with her fists, a little puzzled at first to know where she was, but Jean, mumbling a curse at being aroused, turned over on his side and slept again.

"How picturesque ! How romantic ! How pastoral !" exclaimed a lady, making the woods ring with a gay laugh. "It is a subject for Monsieur Boucher to paint—Glaucus and Daphne asleep in the Forest of Arden. Such subjects would make us feel more tender, more inclined to worship the blind god, the

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only god worth worshipping, than the cupids and nymphs on our ceilings and screens. What say you, M. de Vaudreuil ? ”.

The gentleman thus addressed for answer poked a dainty lacquered stick he carried into the ribs of the sleeping Jean, who started up angrily with language never heard at the king's levée. ‘

“Decidedly bucolic,” said the gentleman in disgust. “For my part I prefer the cupids and nymphs.”

By this time Jean was wide awake and aware of the exalted state of those before him. He got rapidly on his feet, and in great confusion slavishly begged pardon for his language, his sleeping, his existing at all. Eglée, too, realised that they were aristocrats ; a great shyness kept her seated and speechless, but wonder fastened her eyes upon them.

“It's one of d'Amboise's lackeys,” said M. de Vaudreuil, in nowise heeding the thoroughly abashed Jean, “but your Daphne, Duchesse, has really fine eyes. Where do the people get their beauty from, I wonder ? I thought we had a monopoly of it at the Château.” And he bowed gracefully to the lady.

“Ever the courtier,” she replied gaily. “What a quaint frock the child wears. My dear, where on earth did you get your clothes ? They make you look like a little old woman.”

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Eglée thus addressed answered simply—

“Old Madame Gobel, who keeps the *teinturerie* in the Rue Fromenteau, lent them to me.”

M. de Vaudreuil put an eyeglass in his eye and examined her critically ; the lady laughed aloud, a clear, bird-like carol.

“How delicious ! How primitive ! It’s one of the people—the real people. A veritable bit of canaille it’s a perfect curiosity *here*. Let us take it with us to Trianon and show it to the queen. What a joke !”

“Splendid, Duchesse ! We’ll say to Her Majesty, ‘Madame, we have brought you a gift, the prettiest little animal we found in the park, the oddest, tamest specimen your savage dogs of people ever littered.’”

“Capital ! capital !” laughed the lady. “Will you come with us, child ? We’ll take you to see the queen. Just think what that will be to tell your friends.”

A light leaped in Eglée’s eyes and died again. She was afraid to go alone, and turned questioningly to Jean. M. de Vaudreuil guessed what was passing in her mind, and said—

“Nothing shall hurt you, little one. You shall have cake and wine and talk to the Queen of France and be brought back to your sweetheart safely. We couldn’t give him to the queen too, she has got enough of his kind already. Come with us, girl.”

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"Come," smiled the lady coaxingly.

"Yes, I'll come with you," said Eglée; "I know you won't hurt me. You are beautiful."

The Duchesse flushed with pleasure. She was indeed beautiful; many men had told her so in their graceful, courtly way, but their praise had fallen on ears that knew full well the value of Court flattery; never before had the compliment been so sincere as in the mouth of this ignorant girl of the people.

"The child reminds me of what I can never forget, Duchesse," said the gentleman.

"M. de Vaudreuil has the reputation for unquestioned taste," said the Duchesse, curtseying in acknowledgment of the compliment and with some asperity, for his graceful phrases jarred on her after the simple truth of Eglée.

"And now for Trianon!" she added gaily. With a light laugh she took the arm that M. de Vaudreuil offered her and, followed by Eglée, they sauntered through the sylvan glades of the park. Jean watched them till they had disappeared out of sound and sight, and then he turned and went back to the Palace. For once his usual mixed contempt and fear of aristocrats was changed wholly into wonder.

The frolicsome Duchesse subjected Eglée to a veritable bombardment of questions, asked with irre-

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sponsible levity. It was her way of satisfying herself that the jest she was preparing for the queen was a harmless one, that Eglée was the ingenuous little vagabond she thought her. The child's answers of laconic simplicity and unstudied effect seemed to give her satisfaction. To find pleasure in the intense ignorance of this child of the people was merely the effort of restless *ennui*. It was a new sensation to come upon a being in whom wonder was fresh—it was like discovering a lost emotion. To take Eglée to Trianon was to wile away an hour not only for the queen but for the whole Court. These aristocrats of the Court of Louis XVI. were the over-blown roses of the *ancien régime*; their fragrance, which in them was pleasure, was exhausted, life bored them unspeakably. Novelty alone could awaken any interest in them, hence the childishness of their amusements; from the quackery of a Cagliostro to the playing at peasant of the Court, novelty was the *sal volatile*, the sole restorative of jaded joy.

The path taken by the aristocrats led quickly to the Little Trianon. Its white walls glistened in the afternoon sun; here, as at Versailles, all windows and doors were open. The voice of one singing at a harp came from within as they approached; there was the click of billiard balls from a Roman pavilion half

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hidden in a leafy shade, mingled with the cool, spraying spout of a fountain. The voice at the harp ceased, and there was heard light laughter and a murmur like the drone of bees. Two ladies came out on the marble steps and, leaning over the balustrade, teased a silly little spaniel on the pavement beneath, which jumped up in the air with loud barks. The tiny court of the queen was in residence.

As they walked across the esplanade in front of the house the Duchesse took Eglée by the hand.

"Now, child, you shall see the queen," she said.

Eglée's heart beat quickly. The ladies teasing the dog over the balustrade looked questioningly at the Duchesse and M. de Vaudreuil as they passed with their curiosity.

"It's a tame people's-child that we found in the park and are going to give to the queen," said M. de Vaudreuil.

They went on into the house and entered a daintily furnished room which was filled with people. In the centre sat a woman with a proudly beautiful face, playing an aria of Glück on a harp. It was the Queen of France.

"Ah, Duchesse!" she said, with a bright, frank smile of welcome. "Ah, M. de Vaudreuil!"

The Duchesse curtsied, M. de Vaudreuil placed

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hand on his heart and bowed; Eglée, in her fantastic costume of which she was so proud, was thrust forward.

"Vive la reine!" she said. It was the salutation of the people—she knew no other.

It sounded odd and inappropriate. Everybody started and looked curiously at the girl, who was ill at ease and frightened. The queen laughed.

"It is a present for you, Madame," said the Duchesse. "We found it in the park; it was lying fast asleep under a big tree in the most picturesque abandon. M. de Vaudreuil says it's tame."

"We thought the novelty of it, Madame, would drive away *ennui*. We brought it to amuse you for the afternoon," added M. de Vaudreuil.

"It was thoughtful of you both to think of my amusement. It is indeed a novelty," said the queen.

In the meantime a number of people had approached, and were eyeing Eglée through their glasses as if she were in reality a species of unfamiliar animal. A portly, handsome man patted her kindly on the head and asked her name and age. His face should have been the best known in France, but it was only the rich who had seen his portrait.

"That is the king, child," whispered the Duchesse when he moved away.

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Eglée felt her whole body stiffen with fright, and she did not hear a question asked her by a graceful dandy who was regarding her through his eyeglass with affected interest.

“The child must be tired and hungry; fetch her an orange or a cake, d’Artois,” said the queen. “Come here, little one, and sit beside me.”

M. de Vaudreuil instantly and gallantly placed a chair for Eglée next the queen; half a dozen lords and ladies brought her fruit, cakes, and wine. The whole room formed a semi-circle round the two and asked Eglée questions, laughing gaily at her answers.

“And your only name is Eglée, and you have no father or mother, and you live in the Faubourg St. Antoine, and you have never confessed any sins,” said a handsome, military-looking man whom she heard addressed as the Baron de Besenval. “Well, you are a veritable little savage. Where do you expect to go when you die?”

“To the devil,” said Eglée simply. Her voice was still faint, she had not regained her assurance.

There was a peal of laughter. The Baron de Besenval continued with mock solemnity—

“That is quite true, Eglée; but how do you happen to be so certain of it? Now I daresay I shall pay his Satanic Majesty a visit too one of these days, but I

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confess to a pleasant uncertainty about it. What makes you so sure?" •

"We all go to the devil when we die in the Faubourg," replied Eglée. "Everybody says so; I suppose they know."

"And have you any more such cheerful ideas in your Faubourg?" said the aristocrat. "Now what, for instance, do you and your friends think of *us*?"

"I know what I think, it isn't what they think, though."

"What do *they* think?" said the queen suddenly. "What do they say of us, of me?"

Eglée had never been trained in the art of conversation. In the Rue Fromenteau people said exactly what they thought when they did not lie; she had no idea of tact; that it was possible to twist words to mean other than that what they were intended to mean was unknown to her. •

"They curse the aristocrats; they say they live on blood and the money of the people; and that the Bastille was built to keep the poor people of the Faubourg from having their rights. And they call you the Austrian and the cause of Frissor, the tanner, dying of starvation last week. But I told Santerre it was a lie."

The gay, ironical laughter ceased, the Baron de

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Besenal muttered a curse to himself, all looked at the queen in dismay. Tears had gathered in her eyes, the exceeding gaiety of her expression had changed into one of exceeding sadness, she looked pale and weary, her beautiful hands lay in her lap listlessly.

The Baron de Besenal rose angrily and said—

“You called it *tame*, de Vaudreuil. Who ever knew a cub of the people that was ever tame? Savages ! ”

The Duchesse became frightened; her jest had miscarried, and she was for thrusting Eglée out of the room, but the queen restrained her. Eglée realised that she had incurred the anger of the aristocrats, that she had made the queen cry, but how she could not understand. All her fear returned, and throwing herself at the queen's feet she exclaimed wildly—

“Oh, Madame, do not let them take me to the Bastille ! Oh, save me, save me from the Bastille ! ”

The whole room burst into an angry jargon. The Bastille was a word never mentioned at the Little Trianon. Marie Antoinette had willed that only the lightest and gayest of lives should be lived there. As if by magic the unwitting Eglée had suddenly broken the harmony of the dainty nest of the birds-of-paradise. The king, who had left the room, now returned in the garb of a miller ; his sisters-in-law, the

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Comtesse de Provence and the Comtesse d'Artois, were with him dressed like shepherdesses.

"What has happened?" said the king. Instantly the etiquette of Versailles fell on the Little Trianon ; it was no longer as the jolly miller with whom they were picturesquely playing peasant that they regarded him, but as the King of France, the arbiter of their destinies. The king noticed the difference in surprise.

"Antoinette," he said lamely, "I thought I was to be a miller."

"Ah, sire," replied the queen very sadly, "my friends will never let me forget I am queen. Gentlemen, ladies, I beseech you, I entreat you, remember we are at Trianon now," and bending over the terrified Eglée she added soothingly—

"My child, you shall not be hurt, I promise you. Look at me, child, trust me. My heart goes out to all of you ; I wish you all to love me. It grieves me deeply, very deeply, to think that I should be so hated. I have never injured any one willingly in my life, believe me. Tell your friends what I have told you, try to make them think well of me. Oh, it is very sad to be so hated."

The queen's manner and words calmed all Eglée's fears ; she burst into sobs.

"Oh, Madame, I love you. I know you are

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beautiful and good. I would die for you, Madame, sooner than grieve you. Oh, pardon me, pardon me !”

“Go, child ; you are forgiven if there was anything to forgive. What hurt me was that my people should hate me as to believe so ill of me. M. d’Amboise, take her away—see, I beseech you, that no harm comes to her.”

The queen rose from her seat in an agitated manner and turned away. Even the roses of Trianon had thorns.

The young Duc d’Amboise led Eglée out of the room. He was a type of the *jeunesse dorée* of the day ; his dress was the most elegant, his manner the most graceful, his appearance the most attractive, his morals the worst of the whole *entourage* of the queen. He was an aristocrat to the tips of his jewelled fingers ; born and bred in an atmosphere of splendour and of frivolity ; trained to regard licence as his special prerogative, to look upon life as the palace of the king of pleasure in which he was the favourite courtier. Lighter, more irresponsible creature there breathed not, the froth of froth on the sunniest sea, the balmy breeze of the most perfumed atmosphere, the butterfly that is ignorant of the net about to entrap it, a figure in *biscuit de Sévres* stamped Louis Seize. It was not

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his fault but his destiny that had made him what he was ; the conditions that made the existence of such as Eglée possible were necessary to the existence or such as he. Between them lay a gulf wider than the poles asunder, and for this very fact making each the stranger, the more curious to the other. To Eglée he was like a vision of an archangel out of the empyrean ; to the Duc d'Amboise she was as the sudden thought of death at a high revel. He was ruffled in all his plumage, his perfumes had grown stale, he quivered with disgust ; she, too, quivered, but it was with an instinctive sense of her own inferiority, the despair of one who knows there is a heaven he is not worthy to enter. Two heyducs in the royal livery were sitting on a gilded settle in the entrance-hall. The Duc d'Amboise summoned one with a glance. The man rose promptly and advanced.

“See that this child is taken away from here at once to wherever she wishes to go,” said the aristocrat, and he turned away. But Eglée plucked up all her courage and addressed him.

“Monsieur, will you tell the queen I shall never forget her, that I love her ? I will tell Santerre in our Faubourg that she is good and that they are lies, lies he has heard.”

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The young nobleman turned. Her voice, her wonderful voice, capable of such an infinite variety of expression, *compelled him to turn*. It had the power of moving him as well as his lackey ; there was a note in it he had never heard before. For an instant he regarded her critically ; she was incongruous in her shabby, soiled finery. He laughed in spite of himself.

“ You are an odd little creature ; are they all like you in your Faubourg ? Tell them to laugh down there ; it’s nicer than to wear such a solemn face as yours. Yes, I will tell the queen that you are a loyal subject.”

Eglée’s heart was full of strange emotions which she was utterly incapable of understanding. Her eyes, filled with tears, and she said in a wistful voice whose sincerity was convincing—

“ Oh, monsieur, oh, monsieur ! ”

There was a sense of absolute truth in the quaint, plaintive child that aroused in him too an emotion which he had never felt before—that of pity. He had a flash of another phase of life than his own of gay insincerity. Her earnestness, instead of vexing him, made him grave ; it was a novel sensation, and without another word or look he walked back into the room they had left.

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The heyduc questioned Eglée, spoke kindly to her, fed her with dainties, and handed her over to a groom to take her back to Versailles. As they left the Little Trianon there was a burst of the lightest laughter, and the queen, clad like the shepherdess of poetic fancy, descended the marble steps in a group of picturesque peasants. The inadvertent jest of the Duchesse was already forgotten. And once more the birds-of-paradise for whose special *insouciance* existence the world was made flitted in gay, gaudy glee.

PART II

1793

CHAPTER III

FIVE YEARS LATER

THE Paris of 1793 was a very different city from that of 1788. The metamorphosis had been sudden, violent, and complete; so rapidly had the times moved, in so fierce and excited a temper, that year-old events of once burning interest had been forgotten in the blaze of more recent conflagrations. With difficulty people remembered when there had been a king and all the paraphernalia of a court at Versailles; it was hard to realise that the stern, pitiless justice which proceeded from the Hôtel de Ville, where the Committee of Public Safety sat ever vigilant, had once issued from the Œil-de-Bœuf and the lips of an absolute monarch. *That* belonged to the annals of history when men were slaves, the fall of the Bastille had crushed *that* out of the memory of men. Five years ago was the *ancien régime*, five years

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ago was a horrible nightmare that was to be thought of with a shudder ; it was a dream from which France had awakened—gone, like all dreams, into nothingness.

And France was awake at last after her nightmare slumber of a thousand years ! The marvel to all men was that she had awakened, not that she had slept so long. But she would never sleep again for fear of the old dream, the maddening terror of that dream with its Bastille, and famine, and wrong. So men had sworn, sealing their oaths in blood. Accursed, ay, thrice a traitor, was the citizen of free France who by thought or word or deed should attempt to cast men back into that pit of sleep. And as treachery lurked everywhere the Committee of Public Wakefulness had made terror the order of the day—terror to bid men sleep no more.

Change, change, change ! In public and in private life, for the two were now one, such the miracle wrought by terror, the five years had passed in everlasting change. Only blood and fear changed not. The ghost of the Bastille, more terrible than the eight grim towers of the old fortress had ever been, would not, could not, be laid. *La guillotine va toujours.*

Nor, as was natural, could people remain unchanged in these five years when the times played

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harlequin with such earnestness. Five years ago aristocrats flaunted themselves in the public view, now they have become emigrants, or are locked tight in Terror's miniature Bastilles. The Faubourg St. Antoine five years ago did not go to Court, but since then it has visited the king both at Versailles and the Tuileries. Change, change, change ! Gone, for ever gone, are the pretty butterflies of yesterday with their pretty, dainty, whimsical ways. Minuets are no longer in fashion, the carmagnole is the rage. The golden voice of Mirabeau has been for ever hushed, and even Marat's croak is stilled at last. Santerre, five years ago, gleaned Court gossip from an aristocrat's lackey round the wash-tubs of Madame Laforge, to-day he is greater than any aristocrat, the first brewer to rise to the top of the world, the first too to refuse to become an aristocrat. Change, change, change. The very years have new names ; it is no longer 1793, but the Year One of Liberty. The world has started afresh, new months, new seasons. Five years ago there was peace, now there is war, civil and foreign ; then Paris slept in its bed the live-long night, now at any hour the tocsins may sound and Paris must shiver from its gentle slumber and cosy coverlids into the bleak streets. All titles and degrees of rank have ceased to exist. The Most

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Christian Majesty is now plain Louis Capet. Five years ago ten thousand swords would have leapt from their scabbards to avenge one look that threatened with insult the highest and fairest lady extant, now those swords rust in their scabbards and the glass of fashion and the mould of form is a byword among her kind. The Rose of Trianon has become the Lily of the Conciergerie.

Change, change, change! The sound of the angelus has ceased, the cry of the cannibal is heard in the land. The gentlest maidens have drunk blood, and men have clad themselves in breeches of human leather. Quondam palaces have become prisons packed to the roof-tree; very God Himself has been driven from His heaven with mockery and curses, the only divinity dwells now on the earth—divinity real and palpable, no longer unseen and mysterious, the divinity of the Right of Insurrection. The world has tumbled in the dark over a precipice—*this* is the appalling shriek of its fall.

To Eglée the five years had brought the ordinary vicissitudes of life. From the child of fifteen she had developed into a tall and finely-made woman of twenty. Between her and Jean there were five years of change. His visits to Paris after his master's establishment had been moved to Versailles were of necessity of very

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rare occurrence. Eglée did not forget Jean, but she lived in the Rue Fromenteau. Other men reminded her of their existence, and Jean all the while, the vain fellow, imitated Faublas after the manner of lackeys and aristocrats. There was no rupture between them, they merely drifted apart from lack of a common environment.

The night the Bastille fell Madame Laforge tumbled head first into one of her tubs in apoplexy and was drowned ; then Eglée had no fixed abode. In a cellar in the Rue Fromenteau she kept what she called her property ; it consisted of a mattress, two chairs, some crockery, a looking-glass from which the quicksilver had run in places, and an old battered trunk containing her scant and shabby wardrobe. To Eglée this cellar and its effects were very precious ; they meant to her a *pied-à-terre*, a shelter, a home. Her personal occupancy was uncertain, sometimes for days she would never visit this abode and she rarely slept in it ; but whenever she left it she was careful to lock the door as a precaution against thieves, of whom she had a dread. Everywhere in the Faubourg she was known, but her condition was one of such poverty and disreputable lowness, that the triumphant Revolution which proclaimed equality to all failed to enhance her prestige. As one of the people in the triumph of

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the people she had learnt to carry herself without fear, and that was all the freedom she had gained from the Revolution. So poor was she that her costume was scarcely ever varied. At all times her head was covered with a red stocking liberty-cap cocked rakishly on her black locks, which were twisted into a loose knot at the neck. A bodice of some black material half exposed her ripe bosom, for she wore no neck-erchief like other women of the people, and her arms, also, were bare to the elbows above which in all sorts of weather the sleeves were rolled. And to complete her sansculottic appearance, a skirt of red serge of the shabbiest description reached half way to her ankles, while her naked feet were shoved into sabots.

She was unquestionably one of the people, a splendid specimen of those strong women who, more than men, are the sinews of the working class—women who do men's work even while they breed. A general air of lawlessness seemed to heighten her seductive physical charms, and her fine and expressive eyes gave to her irregular features a fascination which was more striking than beauty. As yet the life she led had left no traces of its dissipation ; youth and superb health and strength rayed forth from her in every expression, every gesture.

All the events that had shaken Paris for the last five

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years were familiar to her. She knew when the tocsin of the Faubourg would sound before it sounded, for she was one of the people of the Faubourg, she was intimate with the men who sounded the tocsin, she knew all that was going on. She had seen the Royal Family brought to Paris from Versailles ; it was her first view of the queen since that memorable day at Trianon. But now she was often to see Marie Antoinette, she took every possible occasion to see her. For over two years Eglée's daily walk had been past the palace and garden of the Tuileries ; she had seen the queen on the return from the famous flight to Varennes ; she had been in the mob that burst into the palace to force the king to accept the Constitution, she had passed under the very eyes of the queen then. On the tenth of August, when the Monarchy at last fell, she was at the door of the Legislative Assembly when royalty was huddled in ; and she had seen Marie Antoinette again and for the last time as the Royal Family were driven to the prison of the Temple. The morbid and overpowering curiosity that kept the queen for ever in her thoughts impelled her now to use every opportunity to glean news of the imprisoned victim of the people. To satisfy this strange fascination Eglée haunted the neighbourhood of the Temple ; she made acquaintances among the jailers, and culti-

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vated one especially, a young man attracted by her, whose tongue she was thus the better able to loosen ; and from him she gleaned many scraps of information. To Eglée Marie Antoinette had become a fixed idea.

She never dreamt of asking herself for a reason of this attraction to the queen ; it was an instinct, and the analysis of it would have been incomprehensible to her. The brief glimpse she had once had of the aristocratic world had aroused her emotional interest, and this interest was the effort of her dumb soul to make articulate the sense of the Beautiful within her. But Eglée did not understand the psychological reason of her sensations, which perhaps made them the more powerful. The political events of the times were not in themselves of any interest to her, her condition was the same whether the *Œil-de-Bœuf* or the *Faubourg* governed France ; the Revolution had absolutely no meaning to her. It was beyond her conception how people so dazzling as the aristocrats should be accursed, yet it seemed perfectly natural to her that the high should be brought low, for all her life she had heard the fall of the aristocrats predicted, and now it had come to pass. Loyalty was an emotion she had never felt, it was unknown in her sphere ; she had therefore no passionate sympathy with royalists, but the sight of the aristocrats degraded to her level filled her with a fascination that revolted her.

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The three cardinal instincts of the people made the Revolution possible—wonder, pity, and revenge. In the people as a whole these instincts could be analysed with mathematical precision ; in Eglée they worked inversely to heredity. Only wonder had as yet been awakened in her, not the wonder of the people at themselves, that they the masters should have been slaves so long ; but a wonder of aristocrats whom she instinctively felt belonged to a higher species than herself. It was this wonder that had caused her to witness every savage event of the Revolution.

The night before the September Massacres began a man in the Faubourg told her, if she wished to see the colour of aristocrat blood, to stand in front of the prison of La Force at a certain hour the next day. Wonder carried Eglée thither, not an instinct of brutality. She stood in a pool of blood—her sabots were stained with it for weeks after—and saw the butchery of the Princesse de Lamballe. Eglée had often seen death and blood in the Faubourg ; she had seen Madame Laforge die, she had seen a man stabbed to death in a quarrel in the Rue Fromenteau ; she, too, had often seen cattle killed at the abattoir of Legendre. There was nothing naturally repulsive to her in the sight of death and blood. But this beautiful aristocrat, this manifest queen's friend, shivering back in horror of the death

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awaiting her on the steps of La Force, then the death itself with its shameful indignities, and the head on the pike borne off to the Temple, awoke a sensation in Eglée so strong, so novel, so unaccountable to herself as to terrify her. She burst into tears. Wonder in travail had given birth to pity. A man spattered with blood accosted her jocosely; she turned on him, dry-eyed in a moment, and in a shrill voice showered on him in her fearless, people's way all the invectives in the vocabulary of the Faubourg St. Antoine.

From that day the aristocrats and the imprisoned queen had a new meaning for Eglée. That gay-plumaged world which had excited her wonder was now stripped naked before her eyes, humiliated beneath even her level. She pitied it. If she had been accused of being a royalist she would have been scornfully amused and resentful at being made fun of. How could *she* belong to the same sphere as Marie Antoinette? In her opinion the Widow Capet was still the Queen of France. She despised the men of Faubourg who were for ever prating of equality, their conceited ignorance was ridiculous. As if such a thing could be possible; ignorant as she was she knew better than that. Familiarity with her own sphere bred contempt for it. The Revolution disgusted her.

By all the laws of heredity and association Eglée

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ought to have been one of the *Vengeresses* of the Revolution. Every quality she possessed conspired to make her one of the tigresses of the Terror ; her place was in the galleries of the Jacobins applauding Robespierre and Marat, at the Revolutionary Tribunal intimidating the judges and jury and tipping the scales of justice as she willed, in the Place de la Révolution grouped with the *tricôteuses* and *poissardes* round the scaffold and gloating in the dithyram of the guillotine. Instead, she consorted with jailers to satisfy her morbid curiosity about Marie Antoinette, and followed the tumbrils to see how aristocrats bore themselves on their way to death. To account for Eglée, as men have tried to account for Mirabeau or Danton, that is, to excuse her, is a vain thing. She too was a phenomenon of the dread Revolution, a fellow-mortal, for all that Nature cast her in a mould of the meanest clay.

In such a creature all instincts must be crude and therefore powerful. Wonder and pity were developed in her, there remained but the instinct of love to be awakened, the most natural of all, and one which she was capable of feeling to an eminent degree. Her sentiment for Jean had been that of a child to one who is kind to it ; for her other paramours, who it might almost be said had at one time or another been the

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male population of the Faubourg, Eglée had always felt kindly. She had a naturally bright disposition, she liked the companionship of men, and had a great deal of native tact in her dealings with them, hence her relations with her so-called lovers had been most friendly. In a different social sphere Eglée would have been romantic; she lacked the education that would have fired her imagination, her mind conceived but few pictures, and those were instincts rather than fancies. The young Duc d'Amboise had, strange to say, left the most lasting impression upon her of all the men with whom she had ever been thrown in contact. His doings, enlarged on by Jean, interested her from the first; the glimpse of him at the masked ball, brief as it was, had fascinated her, and the meeting with him at Trianon under such extraordinary circumstances had ever remained fresh in her memory. He was connected with the most important events in her life. She had learnt that he had left France, but beyond the memory of him Eglée took no further interest in him. Perhaps the fascination of Marie Antoinette for her took the place in her heart of love not yet kindled. In such a strong, healthy girl all natural dormant instincts by reason of the life she led would intensify those already aroused. Unknown to herself love was struggling to find a voice in her poor,

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benighted soul ; wonder and pity were its forerunners, and till it came they were doing its duty as best they could. *This was Eglée's psychology.*

The Revolution was an anvil on which character was forged. Who can doubt but that for the holocaust of France Madame de Staël would have been merely another of many witty *grandes dames* who played gracefully with brains ; that Madame Roland would have continued to take the quiet interest of an educated woman in politics ; that Charlotte Corday would have lived an uneventful provincial life ; and that Eglée, a fille de joie of the Faubourg St. Antoine, would never have become possessed of a fixed idea that forced her, too, to play a part in that drama whose drop-curtain was the blood-stained blade of the guillotine ?

In the Year One of Liberty all things were possible, it was the heyday of Nature. All the instincts of men were emancipated from conventions and flourished as in the Age of Stone ; there was no longer any law to compel men to be other than what Nature meant them to be. Civilisation may weep over the Marie Antoinette of the Conciergerie, more impressive in her degradation than in the days when it seemed as natural to offer her a throne as any other woman a chair ; it may shriek over the monstrosities of

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Marat and the still more infamous Père Duchêne. But they are *facts* which no weeping and shrieking can alter. On that great anvil of the Revolution all manner of men and women were forged—Marie Antoinettes, Rolands, Cordays, Eglées. Once more in the created world Nature had appeared and exclaimed—

“Behold me, I am here. It is *I* that am from everlasting to everlasting, that hold the keys of destiny in my hands. You religions, you civilisations, you conventions, you dæmonic upheavals, it is *I* that made you all. You are my puppets; you shall do my will when I command. I am not the golden calf Art, the ritual of whose vain worship is as you may choose to make it. I am fact, fact, fact; though long absent, I have returned. You may weep and shriek, but you shall acknowledge me!”

CHAPTER IV

IN THE RUE FROMENTEAU

“ I TELL you, Couchette, I wish the Holy Virgin had given me brains instead of this,” said Eglée, smiting her breast scornfully with her fist. “ Ah, if I had brains, do you think I should fail like your clever Toulan ? ”

“ What’s the use of fretting ? ” answered Couchette, “ *we* haven’t got brains, and the Holy Virgin is too much of an aristocrat to heed *our* prayers. Besides, bastards like us couldn’t pray anyhow. No one ever baptized us.”

“ Who’s talking of praying, you fool ? If prayers were any use don’t you suppose the queen would be well across the Rhine by now, instead of being shut up in the Temple ? I say, Couchette, I’ve heard more news of her,” and Eglée, lowering her voice, continued in a confidential whisper, “ they have

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taken the Dauphin away from her and are half-starving her. It's to break her spirit. Gontran, the municipal guard, told me that nobody would recognise her, she's so changed. I asked him if she wasn't still beautiful, and he says old Mother Manette who sells sausages down the street is better to look at ! And her clothes are not as good as ours. She wears a black dress that she has worn ever since the king died ; the skirt got caught the other day on a chair ; there was a hole in it that long," measuring, "and she had to mend it ; for the Convention said, when she asked for new clothes, that there were Frenchmen dying for France who had no shoes on their feet. Ah, my God ! she had clothes and jewels enough when I saw her at Trianon. And beautiful—oh, là là là, Couchette ! It was better than any dream I ever had. She put her hand on my head, so, and said, ' Nothing shall hurt you, my child, I promise you ; and I want you to believe I am good and love you all ; nothing hurts me so much as to be hated. Tell this to your friends, and try to make them love me.' Then——"

"Did she have beautiful rings ?" interrupted Couchette irrelevantly.

Eglée went on with impatience—

"Can't you listen and wait till I finish before you

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begin to ask questions? Of course she had rings—enormous ones—pearls and diamonds and emeralds and six pearl necklaces, too,” Eglée added, with an exaggeration that was impressive. “She was just like the print I saw in the Palais Royal—Marie Antoinette de Lorraine d’Autriche, Reine de France.”

“Pearls are unlucky,” said Couchette.

“Well, you little fool, what if they are—is that anything against her? Now you’ve put me out in my story. I forget what I was saying, but I should like to tickle Hébert, Robespierre, and Fouquier-Tinville in the heart like that girl from Caen who made Marat taste his own medicine.”

“We could never get near *them*,” said Couchette, “they are too grand for us.”

“Oh, for brains, brains!” cried Eglée, “I want to do something for the queen—I must, Couchette, she is so beautiful and so good. They are all lies, lies, lies they tell of her. Don’t we know the Faubourg?—lies, I tell you.”

“I wish I had seen her, Eglée, if she is so beautiful and good.”

“Ah, I have it,” cried Eglée, who was not listening to her friend, “see, Couchette, we will walk all over Paris and cry, ‘Vive la reine!’ and when people gather round us, as they are sure to do, I will talk to

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them of the queen, and you shall back me up. Let us begin at once !”

The idea did not strike Couchette with favour.

“If we cry ‘Vive la reine !’ they will imprison us,” she said.

Eglée laughed scornfully.

“You are a fool ! Imprison us as what ? We are not aristocrats ; the stupid Faubourg, that thinks it knows so much and doesn’t know anything, knows that. Filles de joie like us are not even Suspects, and if Hébert arrested us he would be laughed out of Paris. No, Couchette, we will do as I say ; come, let us start at once.”

“Eglée,” suggested Couchette timidly, for she was afraid of her masterful companion—“Eglée, you know ever so much more than I do, you have seen the queen and she has spoken to you and you have seen aristocrats too, you are wise, but what good can you do ? To cry ‘Vive la reine !’ in the streets won’t get the queen out of prison, and it will surely get us into trouble. Hébert will have us put out of the way somehow to stop it. Eglée, you have made me love the queen, but I am afraid of Samson with his bloody hands,” and the girl shuddered.

“Of course you are afraid,” replied Eglée, “why, it takes an aristocrat to show us how to die. Did you

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ever see one yet that looked a coward in the Place de la Révolution? But, see, my friend, you have got to do one of two things, for we must help the queen in some way. You have got to strengthen that cowardly people's heart of yours and cry 'Vive la reine!' with me all over Paris, or go this night and stab Hébert as he leaves the Jacobins. 'Vive la reine!' is easier and safer, my friend. Oh, for brains, just for an hour! Couchette, when Toulan failed and I saw Madame de Jarjayes at the Revolutionary Tribunal looking so soft and gentle and yet so full of courage, I said to myself, 'Why shouldn't I do something for the queen too, to prove my love? If a soft little creature like Madame de Jarjayes can try, why not Eglée, who is strong and not afraid of any Hébert or his guillotine?' I have walked the streets for hours, and sat alone in the garden of the Luxembourg, thinking, thinking, thinking. O God! it was torture. I have all the courage, all the opportunities; I should never be suspected; I have everything necessary to save the queen—everything save the brains. O God! O God!"

Eglée smote her fists together savagely, and Couchette looked at her with fear.

"Oh, Eglée," she said, "the queen must indeed be very beautiful and good for you to feel so. You would not be at all afraid to die for her!"

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"Die?" cried Eglée fiercely. "I and you are dirt under her feet! Die? Why, that's what we are made for! Besides," she added soothingly, for the greater encouragement of her companion, "think what *we* are. The guillotine is too proud to stomach *us*."

"But, Eglée, what has made you so suddenly wish to save the queen? You never spoke like this before when we pitied her; now you are for doing something at once, and you talk of dying for her; you frighten me."

"I will tell you," replied Eglée, and the passionate intensity with which she spoke thrilled the irresolute Couchette. "Yesterday at sunset I was going to the Jacobins. I hadn't eaten anything for the day and I was hungry. I knew I should find Laroche in the gallery, and he would give me supper, and his bed has blankets. As I turned into the Rue St. Honoré I heard cries in the distance of 'Vive la République!' We know what that means at sunset, don't we? I saw the crowd coming my way and dancing the carmagnole. It came slowly, for the tumbrils were so full the horses could just draw them. There were six, Couchette, packed full. In the first five all were aristocrats, men and women together. Some were chatting and laughing, some looked as proud, as proud

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as the ones I saw at Trianon, and their clothes were so fine, too—oh, là là ! it seemed a pity to wear such fine clothes to have them all messed with blood at the guillotine. There wasn't one that looked afraid. It was easy enough to tell they were aristocrats—they couldn't hide *that*. I wondered to myself what it must seem like to be in a tumbril, going down to the Place de la Révolution. Afraid of that mob ? Not I, Couchette ; they are the same people as we are. Afraid ? I would spit on them from the tumbril that carried me. Heavens ! I've seen so many heads fall into Samson's basket, Couchette. In the last tumbril there was a girl packed in among murderers and forgers of assignats. She was dressed all in black—it was mourning for some of her kin, perhaps—and she was smiling, oh ! such a sweet smile, and there was a look in her face, Couchette, as if she was expecting something that was going to give her joy. She was almost like a child, she was so young and oh ! so beautiful I couldn't take my eyes from her, and I followed the crowd to the Place de la Révolution. It was a beastly sight ; they threw the bodies and heads back into the tumbrils anyhow, in a stinking, bloody heap. It made me feel my neck to be sure my own head was on all right. I am sick of this Revolution, it is nothing but blood, blood, blood ;

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and as for a sight to see, why, Legendre might as well bring his cattle and slaughter them in the Place de la Révolution. "But the girl didn't even turn pale while the guillotine was falling with that click, rush, and thud. She stood with her hands folded on her bosom and her face turned to the sky, still smiling that strange smile. The man who was just before her had murdered his wife, somebody said, and he fainted with terror, the cur! and they cut off his head without his knowing it. When Samson called her number she mounted the steps quickly, but slipped on the top in some blood—the scaffold was swimming in it. Samson picked her up with his bloody hands, and I could see the marks of his fingers where he touched her. Poor thing! she was pale enough then, and I thought she was going to faint, but not she. I don't know her name, and nobody could tell why she was to be guillotined. The only reason was that she was an aristocrat. Then, I don't know what made me, but I hated myself for being in that vile mob, and I hated the brutes that were cursing her, and I shouted out at the top of my voice, 'Enough, enough, brutes! canaille! That's a morsel too dainty for our bloody glutton of a guillotine!' But while I shouted the words her head fell into the basket. Ugh! ugh!"

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Eglée stopped with a shudder. Couchette looked at her in fascination. •

“The brutes wanted to mob me, but I wasn’t afraid of them. No one dared to touch me, I can tell you, for my blood was up. I was ready to fight any one of them, and the cowards knew it. I forced my way through the crowd, and on the outside I heard a man say, ‘While they are about it they might throw in the Austrian she-devil; I want to see the colour of her blood.’ I yelled in his ears, ‘Vive la reine, you pig!’ How he jumped then and cursed me! And then I went across the Place de la Révolution laughing. That’s why I wish to do something for the queen, for they’ll have her next. I tell you, Couchette, I hate the people with their *citoyen* this and their *citoyenne* that. I hate them!”

This conversation took place one September afternoon of the Year One of Liberty in Eglée’s cellar in the Rue Fromenteau. Couchette, like Eglée, was a *filles de joie* of the Faubourg St. Antoine, a waif of seventeen, to whose degraded origin no clue existed. Eglée had once befriended her in a street brawl, the justice of which the strong girl of the people did not examine. Two women hammering the life out of another, and that other bleeding from a knife thrust, was sufficient cause for Eglée to interfere. Her

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timely assistance probably saved Couchette's life. As it was, when the women were driven away, the girl lay fainting in the street. The life in the Rue Fromenteau was not adapted to develop the quality of tenderness in the nature of its inhabitants, and Eglée, secure in her own great physical strength, was the last to yield to the soft impulses of humanity. The brawl in which she had just taken part was an ordinary one of the slums; victory was the chief thought in her mind. The idea of playing the Good Samaritan, never occurred to her, and if it had, she would have dismissed it with contempt. She had no intention of bringing the ridicule of her quarter upon herself by going about rescuing maltreated filles de joie. But in this case there was a desperate helplessness in the fragile child lying in a pool of blood at her feet, and before moving away Eglée stooped down and staunched the wound. The girl, who had fainted, opened her eyes in which abject terror was expressed, and clung feebly to Eglée's skirt. This mute appeal to her protection touched Eglée, and she took Couchette to her cellar and placed the girl on her own mattress. Since then Couchette had been as clay in Eglée's hands. From the day she had entered Eglée's cellar it had been her home. She knew no other, for Couchette had no "property" like Eglée; she carried all hers on her

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person and previously had slept where chance willed.

The connection thus formed between the fragile, timid waif, so utterly unable to fight the fierce battle of life in the Faubourg St. Antoine, and Eglée developed into friendship—the friendship of two outcasts instinctively drawn together by the wretchedness of their lives. No terms of endearment, no tokens of affection passed between these two, but the bond that united them was none the less strong. To a passionate nature like Eglée's the burden of her thoughts was a weight almost intolerable to carry alone. She kept her feelings locked tightly in her own bosom, for she was not one to lightly expose them, and there they tortured her with their increasing perplexity and fierceness. In her all the instincts of a powerful and ignorant soul were at last awakened, and love, the greatest of these, was starving. It was this starving instinct of love that made her idolatry of the queen possible, that made the attachment of Coucherette acceptable. By degrees Eglée confided all her thoughts to her devoted companion, who loyally accepted all that Eglée said as infallible, and who shared the same scorn of the Revolution and admiration for the queen. When Eglée said they must do something to aid the queen, it did not strike

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Couchette as absurd, but as impossible. Timid and irresolute as she was, she would try to save the queen even to the length of dying for her, if Eglée ordered it. For so complete was Eglée's ascendancy that it would be easier for Couchette to die than to disobey her. The tale of the girl in the tumbril going to the guillotine fired her courage as it was meant to do, but it was not so much the tale as the magic of Eglée's voice that nerved her. Eglée inspired her with both love and fear.

In a fit of futile impatience at the fate that gave her desires she could not realise, Eglée flung herself face down on her mattress. For many minutes she lay there motionless trying to puzzle out some scheme, some plot to save the queen. Couchette watched her silently, afraid to speak. Suddenly Eglée sat up, she had an idea.

"Couchette," she whispered, glancing towards the shut door and a small iron-barred window near the ceiling, out of which nobody had ever looked, "if I could get into the Temple I could change clothes with the queen."

Couchette regarded her with surprise.

"It would be possible for the queen to pass out as me, and come here. Who would ever think of looking here for her? It would be the safest place in

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Paris for her to hide till she could manage to escape. Of course when they found me, they would—pst !” And Eglée made a sign of decapitation.

“It seems to me,” said Couchette, lowering her voice, and, like Eglée, glancing suspiciously at the door and window, “that they would search here first, and they would suspect me as your friend.”

Eglée’s face dropped, she had not thought of that possibility.

“You are right, I am a fool. Oh, for the brains of Toulan and de Jarjays ! We shall have to stick Hébert like a pig after all.”

“There are many more like Hébert,” said Couchette, “we thought Marat was the only villain, but this Hébert is worse ; and depend on it after him there are others just as bad.”

The girl’s practical argument was discouraging, and Eglée pressed her fingers against her temples and moaned.

There was a knock on the door. The two would-be conspirators looked at each other guiltily. The knock was repeated, and then Eglée rose to her feet, and with one stride stalked to the door and flung it open. The next moment she burst into wild, uncontrolled laughter.

“It’s old Mother Manette ! Come in, come in.”

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A ferocious woman of about fifty entered. She was one of the characters of the Rue Fromenteau, and held in esteem by Patriotism. After the September Massacres she closed her cook-shop where for years in a dingy, greasy room she had manufactured sausages, the succulence of which had gained her a reputation and a living in the Faubourg. The spirit of the Revolution had entered her soul so that she could no longer attend to her business. She was sacrificing herself to the Revolution, she said, and, worked to a state of frenzy, she spent her days round the guillotine, knitting stockings for the soldiers on the frontiers, and her nights in the galleries of the Jacobins. She, too, had a fixed idea : it was a ghoulish glee in the spilling of blood. Her naturally repulsive aspect was heightened by the dress she wore, which was that of the *carmagnole complète*. A red nightcap, a sort of stocking liberty-cap such as Eglée wore, covered her thin, dishevelled grey locks ; for bodice she wore a woollen tricolor spencer that buttoned up to her chin, and a blood-coloured handkerchief was knotted loosely round her neck ; her nether limbs were covered with a skirt of coarse black cloth that reached to her sabots ; while about her waist was buckled a belt of human leather, of which she was particularly proud, and in it was stuck a long, murderous knife, used, it was

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rumoured, with effect in the butchery of the previous September. Clad in this fantastic guise her tall, gaunt figure was terrifying ; she seemed scarcely human, and this impression was accentuated by her long, red-brown face, whose expression was malevolent in repose and in animation rabid. Her voice, too, by reason of shrieking round tumbrils, and in the frequent insurrections, was hoarse almost to inarticulation. As she stood in Eglée's bare cellar she was not unlike a caged wolf that had been starved to madness and in some previous tame moment decked out in the costume of a punchinello.

In spite of, or perhaps on account of, her terrible appearance, she had acquired power, and her unquestioned patriotism had given her a prestige that made her respected by Marat and made use of by the infamous Hébert. Since the fall of the Bastille the Citoyenne Manette had never known what it was to be afraid of mortal man till the terrible eye of Danton had fallen on her in a tumult in the Jacobins and his lionlike voice roared her out of the galleries. In him she had recognised her master, one who could crush her if he so deigned ; and she feared him. A bully and a coward, this woman was one of those furies that are instinctively associated with all the horrible paraphernalia of the Terror. Her kind was common

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enough ; it furnished the tipstaves of the Revolutionary Tribunal, the bodyguards of the guillotine. It was to this class that Eglée and Couchette should have belonged, into such as Manette that they should have developed by all the laws of custom and environment.

"Good-day, Citoyenne Eglée," said the woman, in her hoarse voice as she entered, seating herself on one of Eglée's two chairs, "how goes trade?"

"What's that to you?" replied the girl gruffly. "You didn't come here to know that. What's your news?"

"The Revolution doesn't seem to have done you any good," said the other, paying no heed to the insult, and casting a glance round the bare warren.

"No," answered Eglée. "A curse on the Revolution! Little it has done for me. Aristocrat blood has not made me any cleaner or any happier, nor you either, Citoyenne Manette, to look at you."

Couchette snickered. The woman looked at the two girls evilly, their plain contempt angered her.

"People have gone to the guillotine for less than that," she cried.

Eglée burst into a peal of ribald laughter.

"They were not like *us*, then. Why, what are *we*, I should like to know? *We* are even beneath the people, *we* are ; when they begin to guillotine the

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dogs, then I'll think of my head. Who the devil do you think the like of me is, old Manette? Keep your threats for the Revolutionary Tribunal; and now come, what brought you here?" And Eglée, with her arms on her hips, boldly confronted her visitor.

"An old friend of yours is in Paris, came back two days ago, nearly dead with a colic caught splashing about in the mud on the frontiers after the cursed Austrians. A batch of soldiers came back from the army unable to fight any more, and the generous Republic has rewarded them as they deserve, the brave fellows. Jean Laforge is the man I speak of; you ought to remember him."

"So Jean is back again," said Eglée. "I should like to see him."

"That's what I have come about," croaked the Citoyenne Manette.

"Well, you've been long letting it out. Why didn't you say so at first without all your cackle about the cursed Revolution?" retorted Eglée.

The woman paid no heed to her and continued—

"He sent me to you, he wants to see you. He is a municipal guard for the present at the Temple."

"At the Temple!" echoed Eglée.

"Yes, and hard enough life too watching Louis Capet's surly widow."

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"I'll go at once," cried Eglée. "Come, clear out, both of you. I never like to leave the door unlocked. There are too many thieves in the Faubourg."

"But can't you wait and hear why he wants to see you?" said Manette angrily, objecting to be treated in this contemptuous way by such as Eglée.

"No, not I; he'll tell me fast enough. Keep your voice, Citoyenne, for the Place de la Révolution; you'll need what little you have for the Ça-ira this evening, when the tumbrils come." And Eglée, pushing both Manette and Couchette out of the room and locking the door, mounted the dark and damp stone stairs that led to the Rue Fromenteau.

Manette could have killed her willingly. Eglée's contempt she could endure with difficulty, but the allusion to her voice, the loss of which in that edacious and quick-moving Revolution stripped her of nearly all her power, stung her to the quick. She would be revenged on this upstart, this mere fille de joie, who dared despise and insult her.

"Now we'll go to the Temple," said Eglée to Couchette, when they stood in the street. "Shout for me at the guillotine this evening, Citoyenne," she added maliciously as, thrusting her arm in Couchette's, she moved away.

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But Manette was not to be disposed of lightly in this free manner.

“I am going to the Temple too,*you slut. I shall denounce you as a suspect, as a traitor, as a secret aristocrat. You shall suffer for your insolence ! The Citoyenne Manette is not to be treated like a dog ! Ha ! even in the Convention they tremble at my name.”

It was a challenge that the fearless Eglée at once took up.

“All right,” she cried, turning round on her heel and swinging Couchette with her, “we’ll go to the Temple together. They say you can tell a dog by his company. The great revolution has made Manette the sister of Eglée, the fille de joie. Come on, my dear.” And Eglée with a wild laugh linked her other arm in Manette’s as tightly as if they were chained together.

The girl was in the dangerous mood of the people when torture pleases them. In her eyes the dread Manette was a bully whom she despised, whom she in nowise feared. Like all Celts, she knew the poison that was in the sting of ridicule. Refined irony was not her forte, nor would it have been effectual in the Faubourg St. Antoine ; but she was mistress of a brutal and coarse mockery.

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Rage rendered Manette speechless, which increased her fury all the more. Struggle as she might she could not free herself from Eglée's vice-like arm. Couchette piped her shrill laugh; the strength and fearlessness of her friend made her courageous.

"Vive la reine!" shouted Eglée. It was a cry never before heard in the Faubourg. In Eglée's ringing voice it acted like a tocsin. People in the street stopped and turned. Swiftly a knot, then a group, then a crowd was formed around the three women.

"Vive la reine! À bas la révolution! Vive la monarchie absolue!" pealed Eglée's voice. It was as if she would rouse the entire Faubourg.

The traitorous cry made the sensitive nerves of the people, who, as Hugenin said, carried the tocsin in their hearts, vibrate. The fearless effrontery of it was like teasing to a lion, but coming from *her* it was mere ribaldry, the loud, meaningless gabble of a fille de joie.

Eglée shouted her treachery, Couchette laughed and swayed herself wantonly on one arm of her friend, while on the other Manette struggled to free herself. The three women were well known. It was evidently a drunken row, and the capricious crowd looked on with amused curiosity.

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"Citizens," cried Eglée, laughing in that free, bold way of hers, "what a joke! See, Citoyenne Manette arm in arm with one who cries 'Vive la reine!'" And again her voice rang out like a silver trumpet. "She loves aristocrats, old Manette; she can't keep her eyes off them. She loves to shout long life to them and down with the people, but she hasn't any voice now—she has shouted it all away—so she got me to shout for her. It's the cry she loves, eh Manette? And, citizens, now she is sorry, for she's afraid they'll arrest her as a Suspect if she's seen with me. Oh, là, là, là! with me!"

Eglée's unbridled merriment was contagious. The crowd broke out too in laughter. It was easy to see that Eglée was merely teasing Manette.

"The fille de joie is drunk," was all the comment made. "She will kill herself with drink. It's only her drunken fun."

And entering into the spirit of Eglée's humour the crowd began to poke fun at Manette. The woman's rage was boundless. She tried to tell the people the truth; she would have Eglée torn to pieces then and there. But her croaking voice was ineffectual in the hubbub. At that moment she would have given the rest of her life for such a voice as Eglée's. There were tones in it whose power she recognised—power

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that Robespierre, and even the great Danton himself, would respect. •

Having satisfied its curiosity the crowd dribbled away. Then Eglée released the woman, and, arm-in-arm with Couchette, ran down the street with a wild and bacchanalian yell. Manette was free, but hatred and speechless rage held her rooted to the spot. *She* had been made a public sport of, and by an Eglée. The poison had been taken from her fang. She understood the motive ; the girl was, as she had said, too mean to be even suspected. The guillotine might indeed refuse her, but Manette plucked her long and murderous knife from her belt of human leather and shook it threateningly at the girl's rapidly disappearing figure.

At the mention that Jean was employed at the Temple a sudden impulse had seized Eglée. Here was the very opportunity that she longed for to save the queen ; Jean and she between them would concoct a plot that should not fail. Already in her strong and impetuous imagination she saw the queen free ; it gave an elation to her spirits that was uncontrollable. Eglée never for an instant dreamt that Jean might refuse to aid her ; she knew his decided proclivity to a life of ease and was certain that the hard surface of the

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Republic had long since tempered his animosity to the aristocrat class ; moreover, the reward he would reap would dazzle him.

"Couchette," she said as they went, "didn't I settle old Manette well ? And do you know what Jean at the Temple means ? Why, it's the brains I wanted. You don't know how clever he is."

"Do you mean that you and he will get the queen out of prison ?" said Couchette, her lesser intelligence only faintly grasping the situation.

"Hush !" whispered Eglée. "Not so loud."

The grim old palace of the Knights Templars towered like another Bastille in the very heart of Paris. Long untenanted, given over to the ghosts of the remote past, its frowning, saturnine walls had no significance to the people. Dreary symbol of tyranny that it was, it had escaped their destructive wrath—forgotten like a garment that has long been rejected. More ill-omened relic of the *ancien régime* there did not exist in Paris in the Reign of Terror ; after the deep, silent sleep of three centuries, sleep haunted with the horrible nightmare of the Saint Bartholomew Massacre, it had awakened to resume its bloody rôle. A very Moloch of stone, it had in the name of the old kings devoured the people, and now in the name of the people it devoured the kings ; it had in turn re-echoed

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with the shrieks of the massacred and witnessed the martyrdom of royalty. The palace of Nemesis, the part it played in "French history, was hoary with crime ; far more than the Bastille it symbolised tyranny—the tyranny of tyranny, Wrong.

Ever since its doors had closed on Marie Antoinette it had drawn Eglée like a magnet. She passed and repassed it daily, gazing with curiosity at its windows in the hope of a glimpse of the august lady immured within its peaked walls. From close observation she knew how to approach the sentry on duty in order to gain admittance to the lodge of the concierge. This knowledge availed her now, and she and Couchette were permitted to pass into the main court where some half-dozen municipal guards were lounging. These men gave the two filles de joie a sportive greeting, which they returned with good-humoured ribaldry. They were at once made welcome, for their arrival broke the excessive monotony of the guards, to whom the dreary Temple was almost as much a prison as to the royal captives.

In reply to Eglée's question she was told that the Citizen Laforge was on duty outside the Widow's room. Could she go up to him ? The girl's heart had leapt wildly at the thought, and expressed itself o its wish ; once on that royal threshold Marie Antoi-

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nette should see her, speak with her, and she, Eglée, would comfort her if they had to drag her dead from the Temple. No, she could not go up, but she and Couchette might wait below in the court and amuse the municipal guards till Laforge was off duty. With this Eglée was fain content ; it was something gained to be within the same walls that held captive her queen. Her spirits rose higher and higher, and infested all with her bold, suggestive glee. With great cunning Eglée kept the subject of all the talk on Marie Antoinette, at whose expense the guards cracked foul and brutal jokes. She gleaned how monotonous was their duty, how dull and lonely was the Temple, how they occupied their idle time in planning fresh insults for the wretched prisoners, how stubbornly the proud queen bore herself even now when she was broken in health and looks, how meanly clad she was. Eglée heard them talk too of Toulon, the municipal guard, and his abortive plot for her escape ; she gathered too that each one of these men was suspicious of the other so that mutual fear banished the very shadow of treachery. With a great sinking of the heart she realised how difficult it would be for the queen to escape ; it seemed as if all the brains, all the courage in the world could not save her. But Eglée was not daunted, her mirth became bolder,

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more unlicensed, more dangerous. She despised these men as she despised Manette, and she was too safe in the degradation of her lot to fear them or aught connected with the Revolution.

“And how is the king?” she asked suddenly.

The guards looked at her blankly.

“The king,” she repeated with an impatient clatter of her sabots on the stone pavement. “Don’t you know who the king is? Are you deaf or fools? The king! Louis XVII! The son of Marie Antoinette! Young Capet, then!”

The words were shrieked from her lips and she burst into prolonged laughter that echoed and reverberated in the grim stone court. They had known all the while whom she meant, but mutual suspicion held them silent.

“That’s a dangerous jest, citoyenne,” said one of the guards.

Eglée made a wanton gesture of ridicule with her hands and face at him. The others laughed.

“The boy Capet,” continued the man, “is the sole thing that makes this life here bearable. No, I will serve the Republic without complaint or reward, but the day they send those sour-faced women upstairs to the guillotine will be a happy one for me. The only bit of fun we have is what the boy Capet makes for

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us. Citizen Simon has taught him some funny tricks that he does like a monkey; sometimes he forgets them or refuses to do them, but Simon's club soon puts him straight. He can sing the Ça-ira and dance the carmagnole, in tricolor costume too, and he spits when you say Louis or Marie Antoinette. I tell you its rare fun to see the young cub go through his tricks." And all the men laughed, slapping their legs to emphasise their brutal glee.

Even to Eglée's untutored intelligence, trained to regard all suffering but that which was physical with indifference, the picture these words created was revolting. She rose from where she sat, crying passionately—

"Canaille that you are, you had better remember Tison's wife! She treated the queen as you and that villain Simon are treating her son, till a fit of remorse drove her raving mad. I tell you, you too shall go mad! Boy Capet, eh? He is the King of France, a son of St. Louis!"

She was terrible in her righteous wrath, there was something sibylline in her passion. Her wonderful voice sounded prophetic in the sombre court of that crime-haunted prison, and under her fearless, flashing glance the men quailed. If ever the power of Right over Wrong was obvious, it was so now, and she who

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dared in the very Temple, in the very Terror, to proclaim such sentiments was one of the least of the people.

In the midst of this tableau Jean Laforge appeared. He had not overheard Eglée's words, and the expression depicted on the countenances of all in the court filled him with wonder. Before he had a chance to ask any question, Eglée cried—

"It's Jean!" And forgetting her wrath in a moment, she rushed up to him and embraced him.

He was no longer the volatile youth of five years before who looked so smart in the d'Amboise plush, but a gaunt, sallow man in the unbecoming livery of the Republic, a man on whose face and form exposure and fatigue had set their stamp. When the Duc d'Amboise had joined the Emigrés, Jean had taken to soldiering; it seemed an easier and, at the same time, a more respectable life to the lackey to join Lafayette's National Guards than to become servant in a bourgeois family or an inn-waiter. After the luxurious servitude of the Hôtel d'Amboise his vanity could not submit to vulgar menial employment, and to his mind, prone to ostentation, there was a dash and glamour about the army that appealed to him. So to the army he went, where the barrack-room and the ranks soon disillusioned him as to the advantage to

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be gained from the lot he had chosen. He had long since come to the conclusion that the glory of marching on the frontiers and chasing Brunswick over the Rhine was a very unrealisable asset. And as he had grumbled at the baseness of the destiny that made such a fine creature as he an aristocrat's lackey, so he now fretted sullenly at the hardships he endured in the more exacting service of the Republic. So much for inferior clay, unsettled by the reading of "Faublas" and the tawdry romances of high life.

When Eglée's expression of gladness of seeing him was over, he said, with a shrug and a glance that included the rest as well as Eglée—

"Ah, Voulet, La Capet is sulkier than ever; we were better off on the Belgian frontier with fever and colic than here. Goodbye, citizens, I'm off till to-morrow; no more of this Bastille than is necessary, say I."

"Goodbye, citizens!" exclaimed Eglée with a mock curtsy. "Goodbye, Couchette, I have private business with Citizen Laforge." And dangling on Jean's arm she quitted the Temple.

The municipal guards glared at her as she departed in speechless astonishment, suspicion, and rage; and Couchette, who remained behind, exerted all her wiles

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to fascinate them back into good-humour, as if to make amends for her companion's behaviour.

The sun was setting as Eglée and Laforge stepped into the street ; it had disappeared behind Paris, but its fresh, blood-red trail was plainly visible in the heavens. It was the red and sombre sunset of late September that is without warmth, that stains all it touches with melancholy—the harbinger of autumn and of death. The two, uncertain whither to direct their steps, turned round and looked up at the peaked walls of the Temple. In this dying hour of the day it seemed doubly forbidding, and both instinctively shuddered.

“Which is the tower the queen is in?” asked Eglée in a half-whisper.

“It's in an inner court, you can't see it from here. Ugh! it's the loneliest prison in Paris. I must have some brandy to get it out of my thoughts.”

“Yes,” said Eglée, “let us drink to old times and forget the cursed Temple.”

And the two walked rapidly and silently away.

At the first café they came to they stopped and sat down at one of the tables. The sinister light had already faded out of the sky and the early night was glimmering with the cheerful sparkle of candles and lamps. It was the hour when all Paris was abroad ; the constant passing of men and women, the click of

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glasses, the sound of laughter, the vivacity of the crowded, babbling café, infected them, as it affects all Parisians, with a sense of comfort and gladness. Jean and Eglée forgot their grievances and anxieties and enjoyed themselves. Though it was the Reign of Terror and the standards flapping in the Place de Grève informed the people that the Fatherland was in danger, Paris was still Paris. Theatres and dances were as popular as ever; the cafés, the streets, the parks, were frequented as of yore with the same multifarious humanity; the world was still running; it was only when men stopped to listen that they heard the reverberating echo of the crash of the Bastille and the Monarchy. To seek the Terror that was the order of the day, you must go to the Convention, to the Jacobins, to the prisons, to the Place de la Révolution where the guillotine made its evening meal off human heads. •

The wine that Jean ordered warmed them and added to the infectious gaiety of the atmosphere.

"Eglée," he said, "you *have* changed since I last saw you. Let me see, when was it? You have grown downright handsome, I swear." And Jean rested his eyes on the girl with admiration.

"You didn't expect to find me the little fool you left five years ago, did you? But you've changed

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too ; I am sorry I can't return the compliment, Jean. I expect you find it harder to serve the Republic than the Duc d'Amboise, eh ? These clothes don't become you like his." And Eglée plucked the coat-sleeve of his municipal uniform.

Jean laughed lightly as he sipped his glass.

"I was good to you in those days, wasn't I ?" he said.

"Yes," she replied, "you were the best of them all."

"Eglée," he said eagerly, "I will be good to you, just like before."

"Will you show me the queen, the beautiful queen, as you did before ?" she murmured. Her brilliant eyes were gazing at him dreamily through half-closed lids ; she was looking at him, but not thinking of him ; her thoughts were picturing the queen, safe on the other side of the Rhine, and herself in a tumbril going down to the Place de la Révolution.

"Dear Jean," she went on softly, "you were good, good to me in those days." And she picked up one of his hands and kissed it.

The touch of her lips, the tone of her voice, the fire in her dreamy, sensuous glance, and the wine he had drunk thrilled Jean. The old charm of the girl was strong on him, stronger now than it had ever

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been, for she could no longer bring ridicule on him. It was the Year One of Liberty, and all were equal. He toasted her and then leaning forward kissed her.

"Ah, Eglée, you still remember my taking you to the masked ball and to Versailles? Who would have thought these cursed aristocrats were so near their end then?"

"Oh, là, là," cried Eglée, "they *were* beautiful! Devil of a lot of ugliness the Revolution has given us. I am tired of it, I hate it; I wish I was an Emigrant Duchess's maid, that would be something like life."

Eglée laughed aloud. Jean looked around him suspiciously. None of the other people in the café were noticing them at all, or if they did they would not give a second thought to the merriment of a fille de joie and a municipal guard off duty. But Jean had a wholesome regard for the Revolution, and Eglée's words, if overheard, might prove mischievous. He leaned across the little table and said in a low tone—

"Be careful, Eglée; we should be suspected if anyone heard us; let us go away."

They rose and sauntered down the street.

"Why did you send Manette to see me?" asked Eglée suddenly.

"I wanted to see you about something very important; I didn't know where you lived, so I sent Manette."

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"Was it about the queen, Jean?" The idea was ever uppermost in her mind, and curiosity also made her inquisitive. "

"Yes," replied Jean.

"Does Manette know?" she asked.

"Yes, Manette knows."

Eglée laughed strangely.

"What's the joke, girl?"

"I settled Manette this afternoon. I frightened her, she won't trouble me again. And I too want to talk to you about the queen, but Manette doesn't know. It's very important, so let us go to my salon in the Rue Fromenteau, it is very private. Nobody can hear us there, and Couchette doesn't count. She knows my thoughts."

They talked of various other things till they reached the Faubourg, each instinctively reserving the supreme subject till they gained the privacy of Eglée's cellar. The girl guided Jean by the hand down the steps from the street, lest in the darkness he should fall.

"Nobody ever comes here to see me," she said apologetically, as she unlocked the door, immediately locking it on the inside again for greater privacy.

Jean remained standing while she fumbled about in the dark for a dip that was stuck in the neck of an empty bottle. Its faint flicker relieved the darkness

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of the cellar, but accentuated its wretchedness. Jean sat down on one of the chairs ; he had not expected much of Eglée's abode, but he was not prepared for such pronounced gloom. There was to him a suggestion of crime in the bare, ill-lit room, and he looked around him uncomfortably.

Eglée sat opposite him and astride her chair.

“ You begin,” she said ; “ I'll listen to every word.” And leaning over the back she regarded him fixedly.

With the air of one conferring a favour, Jean took Eglée into his confidence.

“ It is about the queen I wanted to see you. You see, the Convention has decided to try her ; she is the cause of all the troubles of the Revolution, and the people want her head. Besides, while she lives she is dangerous ; if any of the plots to rescue her had succeeded no Frenchman's life would be safe. The Terror would be nothing to her revenge. Just as she sent all the money she could put her hands on to her brother, the Emperor, so she would give him any part of France he wants. I tell you, she and that rabble on the Rhine would make all France swim in blood. The Jacobins say she must die for her crimes if she were the sister of a hundred emperors. And the sooner the better, say I, then there will be no more of that lonely jail duty for me at the Temple ; and besides,

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Eglée, my girl, her death will do me a good turn with the Republic, for I don't mind telling you the Revolution is far harder to please than the aristocrats. For you never know when you'll be sent to the guillotine. Nobody is safe in these days. You see, all the witnesses against her will be tried patriots, and they will be well rewarded, and I have offered to be a witness, and that's why I want to talk to you, for you can help me."

"How?" murmured Eglée, almost inaudibly. The gaze that she had fastened on him when he began to speak never once faltered, but its expression changed as he revealed his mind. It made him nervous, it was so steady, so mysterious, so terrible.

"How?" he echoed, unable to take his eyes from hers as if she willed him to look at her.

"Well, for one thing, I shall accuse her of coming to the balls of the people to mock them. You remember what she said that night when she lost her mask? She said it was a scandal for her to be seen there, that was an insult to the people. You will corroborate all I say. I shall swear I was at Trianon with you and that two aristocrats tore you away from me and carried you off to make sport for her, and afterwards she nearly had you killed because you told her you hated the Bastille. You remember how they made fun of the people that day? The lackey at

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Trianon who brought you back to Versailles to me is here in Paris now, he will back us up in all we say ; we can make it as bad as we like. We can prove how she hated the people. I tell you it will be an accusation in itself to condemn her, not to mention how it will put our patriotism beyond suspicion. But, Heavens ! Eglée, look cheerful over it, girl ! ”

• Her breath was coming hard, she almost panted. His character was as clear to her as daylight ; she understood all the mean selfishness of the man. In his jealous envy of the aristocrats he had never anticipated such a Revolution ; in his heart he hated the Republic, it was a capricious and cruel taskmaster. His patriotism was a mask he did not dare lay aside ; he had hated aristocrats because he was jealous of them, he hated the Republic because he feared it. He was a traitor to both his masters, a traitor and a coward. Such a man was the last in the world to lean on, to expect anything from ; weak and selfish to the core, no bribe could make him true, no bribe could make him brave. •

“Is that all ? ” whispered Eglée, when he had finished, still holding him with her powerful gaze. Then, realising how completely her wild hopes were shattered, with a cry she buried her face on her arms that were crossed on the back of the chair.

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Her grief was brief and tearless. Rage mastered it. In that moment Manette appeared an angel of light compared with Jean's selfish and calculating villainy. She sprang to her feet and paced the dimly lighted room. Jean was stupefied.

"What is the trouble, Eglée?" he asked.

She stopped suddenly in front of him and exclaimed—

"Ah, if I had Manette's knife here, you should never leave this room alive. I should kill you! I hate you!" And she began to pace the room again, raging and smiting her breast.

Jean was now thoroughly alarmed; the criminal aspect of the cellar was suggested to him more forcibly than ever. This raving creature might yet find a way to kill him, horrors seemed to lurk in the semi-lighted corners. He was defenceless and utterly unnerved; he looked about for a means of escape; the door was locked, but the key was in it, he rushed to it. But Eglée had seen him and was there before him with her strong body against it. To struggle with her would be worse than useless in his weak state of health, she would have him quickly at her mercy, as in fact he already was. He retreated from her formidable presence and tried to pacify her.

"But why, why, Eglée do you hate me? we have always been friends."

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"I will tell you why," she cried, "because I love the queen ; to save her I would die for her ! Ever since Toulan failed I have been trying so hard—oh, so hard—to think of some plan to get her out of the Temple. But such as I have no brains, what can I do ? Yet, I thought, if I could only find some one who had the brains, I could give myself to be used to free her. My courage, my devotion, would be of great help, and then my condition is so low that who would ever suspect *me* ? Manette came here to-day when I was thinking, thinking, and told me that you were in Paris and employed at the Temple. It was the very idea I wanted. Between us we could save her. I know you hate this Revolution, though you pretend to serve it, but it is only because you are a coward. You are a coward and a villain ! What has the queen ever done to you ? Ah, you came to the wrong person when you came to Eglée, and the day they try her I will be there and I shall testify for her. I will give you the lie at the Revolutionary Tribunal—oh yes, I know how to do it, you coward, you canaille ! I will inform against you ; you are a traitor and would sell yourself to the aristocrats or the Republic, whichever will pay the most. I know you now. Go, get out of my sight, you coward, you traitor ! The guillotine is the mistress for you !"

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The frenzy of her appearance, the passion of her words that were hissed from her lips, filled him with a craven fear. She unlocked the door and throwing it open stepped aside. He passed out quickly without a word and bounded up the dark, stone steps into the street, down which he ran panic-stricken.

And Eglée, with a wild cry, threw herself on the floor and wept. It was her first acquaintance with despair.

CHAPTER V

IN THE PLACE DE LA RÉVOLUTION

FOUQUIER-TINVILLE, the vicar-general of an infallible revolution, like so many others, had caught the epidemic of the times, he was sick of a Fixed Idea. With him monomania took the form of a ceaseless suspicion of plots ; wherever two or three were gathered together there surely must be a plot in the midst of them. If he had been a melodramatic playwright in search of material he could not have displayed greater zeal than in the interest he took in those who wrought conspiracies. Plots, plots, plots—a veritable Golconda of thrilling material to have made his fortune if he cared to essay the building of romance. But as to the value of this material that Fouquier discovered in such quantities it lacked originality. The schemes of the plotters had a tiresome uniformity ; however clever and varied they

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might be in detail their general aim was the same—to relieve Fouquier of his duties and hand the Fatherland over to Brunswick and the Emigrant Noblesse. To guard against these undesirable eventualities he was diligent in the pursuit of his fixed idea. It led him at first to the prisons of Paris, for he was morally certain that nowhere else would his suspicions be more thoroughly realised. So in his judicial capacity, he subjected the prisons to daily examinations, and the workers in plots were brought before him in batches, or *fournées*, as they were called. It was by no means necessary to prove a conspiracy existed, the mere suspicion of it was ample proof, and the chance of the hatching of a successful plot could only be negated by a general holocaust. The result of this daily quest of what rarely was to be found filled the tumbrils with those whom he sardonically described as winners in the lottery of Saint Guillotine. But his fixed idea carried him still further afield, and he continued his exaggerated search throughout Paris and France. This suspicion of plots had now become infectious, and a morbid Convention in a moment of panic had passed its Law of the Suspect, which more than any decree firmly established Terror as the order of the day. To help Fouquier find his plots no patriot, no more than the enemy within the gates, was to be

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counted above suspicion. So much for Fouquier-Tinville and his fixed idea.

It was a conviction of this that turned the soul of Jean Laforge to water as he fled from the presence of Eglée. He had heard that Saturn had an unappeasable appetite, and on occasion had been known to have his children served as the *pièce de résistance* at Olympian banquets, and he may or may not have remembered that a certain people of antiquity worshipped a god called Moloch, whose habits were cannibalistic. If, under the circumstances, he was inclined to believe that the worship of these deities with its orthodox rites was in vogue in the Fatherland and respected it accordingly, he was hardly to be blamed. Between High Church Girondins and Low Church Jacobins a timidly facing-both-ways young man was in a dilemma, the usual solution of which in those days was a drive at the Republic's expense to the shrine of the saint in the Place de la Révolution.

In the cellar the idea of immediate death filled him with craven fear, in the street it still haunted him. His sole thought was that he had betrayed himself in speaking of the Republic. It would be a deadly weapon in the hands of an informer, and the danger ~~he met~~ from the infuriated Eglée seemed so imminent, that he could scarcely shape his terrified wits into lucidity.

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All the next day at the Temple this suspicious fear ate into his heart and brain its paralysing suspense. It was the longest day he had ever known. He remembered Toulan and the suspicion with which the sentries at the Temple were now watched. He dared not look a municipal guard in the face lest he should read written there his discontent, his fear, his treason. He could think of no means to parry the blow that Eglée might at any moment strike, and every hour of the day he expected to be arrested as a Suspect on her information. Nor was flight possible; to make it successful one must be provided with friends and money; his appearance in any village in France, if incapable of a plausible explanation, would be sufficient ground on which to arrest him; and at the best escape meant starvation beyond the borders for him.

With such men *amour propre* is sensitive, and they are wont to apologise to themselves for the mistakes they make. At the end of a week he was still safe; the tensity of his fear slackened, he began to gather hope. He tried to take comfort out of the thought that one even more suspiciously careful than himself, if such an anomaly existed, would never for one moment have fancied that Eglée was a ~~compro-~~ aristocrat. It was beyond reason to suppose that in

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a cellar of the Faubourg St. Antoine there could exist a woman with whom the rescue of Marie Antoinette was a fixed idea. But the consolation of such a thought was very feeble; the only real piece of mind he should ever know again was to deprive Eglée of the power to inform against him. That she could be denounced as a royalist never entered his head, the degradation of the girl's lot was her safeguard; the man who tried to make her a Suspect would only bring ridicule on himself. Who, indeed, was she that the State should fear her? Eglée was out of the reach of the Law of the Suspect. The girl's cunning instinct made her fully aware of this; it heightened her boldness, it strengthened her fearless contempt which made her the match for Manette, for the municipal guards, for Jean. It gave to her degradation a possibility of power that required only brains to make it effective. Jean understood this, but to shape it into definite action to ruin the girl was beyond his ability. Suddenly he remembered Manette, and hope grew to twice its stature in him at a bound. From what Eglée had said he gathered she had offended Manette; the hag was not one to go unrevenged, her resources were great. He no sooner thought of her ~~that~~ he determined to see her at once; he would be on his guard with her, he would be full of guile, he

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would not betray himself to *her*. Surely between them Eglée might be removed before she played the trump card she held? Without delay he went in search of Manette. The decree of the Convention that made Terror the order of the day had made no allowance for the distinction between the patriot and the royalist. The Terror fell on all alike, none could escape from it. The distracted Convention, striving too late to make the distinction, invented the Law of the Suspect—the law by which the royalist might be distinguished from the patriot. In a moment of insanity the Convention had crowned Terror. To Fouquier-Tinville, to the royalist, to the patriot Suspicion was in the air they breathed. The revolution was in travail, pang after pang; what a shriek was that of Liberty! The miscarriage was Terror.

But Eglée in the meantime was busied with other things than the destruction of Jean Laforge. He had completely passed out of her consideration; he had brought no aid to her, and proved himself both devoid of brains and a coward. There was no further use for him in her schemes.

Crushed with despair, against which her masterful nature vainly struggled, she had towards morning fallen asleep from pure mental exhaustion. The day was well advanced when Couchette returned to the cellar

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and found Eglée in a sound slumber on the floor. Couchette awoke her timidly. • •

Eglée stretched herself with a yawn and sat up ; she felt sore, very tired, and somewhat dazed. With a shudder she remembered the despair of the previous night, then she rose to her feet, and with the vanity of a woman looked at herself in her apology for a mirror. Couchette's voluble questions met with no response. Eglée next splashed her face with water and passed a comb through her hair. The effect was marvellous ; she looked her natural self again.

"Couchette," she said when she had finished her brief and silent toilet, "Jean Laforge has not got any brains at all and not so much heart as a louse." And then Eglée related the events of the previous night.

"Poor queen!" said Couchette, "now nothing we can do will save her." •

"There is one chance left," replied Eglée, with energy.

"What is it ?" asked Couchette.

"We must walk all over Paris shouting 'Vive la reine !' People will crowd around us from curiosity, then I will tell them about the queen. If there is a heart that knows pity it must be made to feel it for her."

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"Oh, Eglée," cried Couchette, "we shall be guillotined!"

"Then they would make us martyrs. It would be a fine thing to die for the queen; I should like it." And Eglée looked at her companion proudly.

"You frighten me when you are like this," said Couchette. "Oh, Eglée, what you wish is impossible!"

"Yes, it is impossible, for the fools would never send two wretches like us to the guillotine. We are safe because we are what we are. I tell you I shall do what I say. The queen is to me my life. I never loved a man yet, but I know love must be like what I feel for the queen. It must enter your body and soul so that you can never think of anything or anybody else, that is love. As I lay there last night before I fell asleep I thought what would become of me when the queen was dead. It nearly maddened me. Then I said to myself, 'Eglée, you must never stop trying to save her; who knows, at the very scaffold she may be saved?' And something whispered to me that if ugly, villainous Manette can make the people obey her why can't I? I am better looking, I have no fear; I will try. I must try, I must not fail to try every plan that will serve her. Plots don't work. Toulan with all his cleverness couldn't succeed; it's a waste of

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time to try plots. I must do it, Couchette, I must do it."

Couchette's timid nature was alive to the dangerous daring of this crusade, but to disobey Eglée was even more dreadful to her. It was impossible. Eglée meant to her everything that her limited intelligence conceived of the bright side of life ; Eglée meant protection, friendship, contentment ; to lose these precious possessions, as she surely would through disobedience, meant a return to those terrible days before she had known Eglée—those days of brutality, of starvation, of despair. So complete was the dominion of Eglée over her that if Eglée walked into a den of lions Couchette would have followed her rather than be separated from her. Never was one more dependent on another than timorous Couchette on masterful Eglée. So now, filled with alarm at Eglée's resolve, Couchette was nevertheless prepared to obey, and to fortify herself the girl reflected on the great strength and wisdom of her friend.

"Come," said Eglée, "no time is to be lost ; we will go at once—now."

The fille de joie of the Rue Fromenteau had developed into the priestess of a fixed idea. In the passionate night-wrestle with despair an irresistible force had arisen in her impelling her to go forth and preach the

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gospel of the captive queen. It worked in her like the "call" of a missionary. When she told Couchette, "I must do it!" there was a light in her expressive eyes that transfigured her, an impassioned sibylline light. Untrained as she was she never gave a thought to the difficulties of her mission; the force at work within her was able to overcome them all, even the greatest of them—the difficulty to speak. Eglée was sure of herself.

As soon as the two girls reached the street Eglée cried aloud, "Vive la reine!" Her voice rang up and down the Rue Fromenteau like the tocsin. Couchette trembled. But to Eglée the trembling of Couchette, the rage of Patriotism, the dithyramb of the guillotine, were alike far from her thoughts. "Vive la reine!" she cried at intervals, walking slowly down the street closely followed by Couchette, who from terror of Eglée and also as if mesmerised by her echoed at first faintly and by degrees distinctly the traitorous royalist cry.

They had not gone many paces when people flocked round them filled with curiosity, which the light in Eglée's eyes turned to wonder. It was the light that had burned in the eyes of St. John the Baptist, that had gleamed from the gaunt eye-sockets of the mission-saints, that had rallied the Crusaders; its fire was holy.

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The press was soon so great about the girls that their progress was impeded in the narrow, antiquated street. Then Eglée harangued the people.

She herself had always been and was even now unaware of the power of her voice, which was capable of such a variety of expression. But those who heard it now were conscious of its marvellous melody. As she had surmised, speech was given her; words did not fail her. In her voice *Vive la reine!* was an incantation; what she said was listened to as if the hearers were under the spell of enchantment. She told them of Marie Antoinette as she herself had seen her at Trianon, of her wondrous beauty, of her charm, of her goodness, of the tears she shed when she learnt she was hated by the people, of the message she had sent to the Faubourg. Then, with a change of inflection sonorously, with tragic solemnity, she painted the picture of the queen as she now was, sitting widowed, childless, friendless, abased, in the Temple. In Eglée's piteous voice she became a martyr dying for the people she loved, a fellow-creature whose sorrows atoned for the past. And at the end of every period of her passionate appeal Couchette's voice cried plaintively, as if it were a dramatic Amen, "*Vive la reine!*"

The effect was wonderful.

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Some emotional women wept, some men nodded their revolutionary nightcaps in assent. This was not the girl they had all laughed at as ready to gabble any cry in her drunkenness ; this was not the Eglée they were all familiar with, the brazen girl with the bold, lawless laugh. This was a priestess with a message to deliver. The frenzy of her eyes, the mesmerism of her voice, the passion of her pleading, made those who stood around her spell-bound.

She stopped and regarded the crowd, and her breathing came hard, like one in catalepsy. A way was made for her and she passed on ; there was no counter-cry of " Treason ! " no violent attempt at suppressing her—only wonder, with a touch of the coarse pity of the people. In the eyes of all the fille de joie was mad.

Throughout that day the two girls wandered through the streets of the Faubourg, and whenever a fresh crowd gathered round them Eglée harangued it as before. And in these harangues her words scarcely ever varied. It seemed as if the power of rhetorical speech came to her when she found herself surrounded by people and left her when her hearers dispersed. The following day the same programme was repeated. The sedition of their conduct struck

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nobody ; as Eglée had guessed, the insignificance of their lot was their safeguard. • •

After two days spent in this manner within the precincts of the Faubourg they ceased to draw a crowd. It was then that Eglée suggested to Couchette the kerbstones of the Palais Royal. In this cleaner, more respectable locality Eglée was not known, but her appearance declared for her louder than any sworn evidence that she was one of the people. Here again the strangeness of her cry, the inspiration of her manner, compelled attention. Once more people crowded round her.

But freedom of speech was not vouchsafed here. In the Faubourg she was merely a mad girl ; in the Place du Palais Royal she might be another Charlotte Corday. The municipal guards made the girls move on : the right of haranguing was a monopoly of the demigods of the Terror, and they permitted no infringement of it. The girls moved on, but through the streets as they went Eglée's "Vive la reine !" proclaimed their coming. Men and women stopped as if they had heard the tocsin ; but there was something in the crier that took the treason from her cry. The words were winged with fire ; they might have fallen from the lips of Walter the Penniless canvassing Europe in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

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Now and then little bands would gather round her, to be suddenly dispersed by the municipal guards with the counter cry, "In the name of the Republic!" And not a few who heard the passionate appeal in their hearts responded to her pleading. It was easy to see that this poor girl of the people had no political aim; if she were mad she was harmless, if she were sane her heroism called for admiration, her loyalty at this eleventh hour was so simple, so touching, so true. In any case she was not dangerous; she preached no revenge, no hatred of the Revolution, no denouncement of any leader. And, moreover, her creed was unbelievable; it had been damned by the blood of the people. Marie Antoinette was a memory that made hearts bristle with hatred; the name was under a curse that not even death could lift. It was a cause that could rally nothing but revenge. The pity and contempt that were Eglée's license have ever been the portion of the inspired.

While on the Pont Neuf there flapped in the idle breeze the banner with its monition that the Fatherland was in danger, the false suspicion of danger was a menace. The Committee of Public Safety had in the meantime made investigations in the Faubourg St. Antoine, where the known character and abasement of Eglée proved the safety of the two girls.

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For once the Committee of Public Safety was in a dilemma—to arrest such girls would have covered it in ridicule; it was a step it dared not take. Yet by the law of the Republic if Eglée were a mad fille de joie her place was in the Salpêtrière; if a priestess of royalty she deserved the guillotine and a grave filled with quicklime. So in its wholesome fear of the ridicule that kills, the Committee of Public Safety ordered the municipal guards not to prevent the criminal cries of these girls, but to keep them moving on, ever moving on. It was like an attempt to put out a conflagration that clumsily scatters the sparks. Eglée and her cry became known everywhere; within the week her crusade lasted she had shouted “Vive la reine!” at the door of the Convention, in front of the Temple, in the galleries of the Jacobins. Of the popular resorts of Paris there remained to be visited the most noteworthy of all—the Place de la Révolution, where at sunset the guillotine daily forged the signature of Liberty.

Perhaps the most dramatic of the many phases of the protean Revolution was the attitude of the women it produced. They were the apotheosis of the Birth of Liberty, babe cut by bloody Cæsarian operation from the womb of convention. From the deep, rich bass of Madame Roland to the shrill treble of a pros-

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titute of the streets they sounded every note in the social gamut. No other drama in the world's history can show so many notable heroines: a heroine for every scene, a drama whose reach is as universal as human nature. No Shakespeare has ever imagined a completer character than Charlotte Corday, calculating with algebraic surety her Codrus sacrifice; a more grandly conceived and perfectly acted tragedy, the world does not possess. And not the pure Maid of Caen alone, but each woman of the General Overthrow carried a whole five-act tragedy within her. It is a dazzling galaxy that the mind recalls. History will long remember Mademoiselle de Sombreuil, the Antigone of France, drinking her cup of blood; the heroic Madame de la Rochejacquelein sharing the fortunes of the pathetic peasants of La Vendée; the young wife of Camille Desmoulins, whose love was a veritable fourteenth-century romance in the midst of the Terror; Cécile Renault, who had the wish but not the will to be another Charlotte Corday; La Cabarus, gloomy Tallien's wife, whose tact may be said to have plucked out the poison from the fang of Terror. These are a few out of many quite as picturesque and dramatic that History and her votaries remember with as much fascination as the widow of Hector or Lady Macbeth.

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What more sensational slide in the phantasmagoria of the French Revolution than that shifty shape of a beautiful demi-mondaine—Demoiselle Théroigne the name of her? First a soiled dove of Paris—a Prince of the Blood's costly plaything; then inoculated with the disease of the age—a Fixed Idea. In the guise of Minerva, dilated to a pythian height, she led the Poissardes to Versailles in the name of antique liberty. Behold her again at the taking of the Bastille—the inspired priestess of the Revolution. An agitatrix of the first order, she was an enemy more to be dreaded than an army corps. How men's hearts leap at her voice and the sacred fire of her eyes! The levity of life is now laid aside—she has escaped from her gilded Louis Seize cage; henceforth her tableaux are highly sensational, the apotheosis of melodrama. Fascinating, impassioned creature, what a hostess she made at Patriot supper-parties! What nights of the gods in which to transcendentalise in questionable luxury on the Revolution in the dawn of the Revolution! And what a drama lies in the catching of this rare bird and caging it in a shameful Austrian prison! Behold that scene with the Emperor, when she speaks to him face to face and by her voice thrills freedom out of him—freedom and a safe passage back to France through his armies. Who can with-

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stand her? Is not the cause she pleads the People's? And what a triumph is her return! She enters the Jacobins on the arm of a poet, and transforms the eulogy prepared in her honour into practical tears of pity for Bouillé's mutinous regiment chained in the galleys. Sensational, did I say? Behold, the Poissardes she had led to Versailles, questioning her inspiration, are for sacrificing her on the altar of the Revolution. Sensational? Go to the Salpêtrière—no, let the violent horse-play of the Poissardes bear sufficient testimony to the likeness of the favour of the People to that of princes.

Among these well-known heroines of the great Drama who filled the stage so prominently and acted with such *tclat*, the rôle played by Eglée was inconspicuous. Her acting is only a rough bit of pathos, the part is almost beyond her scope, so startling is it in its crudity and general surprise. Between her and the brilliant historical stars what a difference there is! To the Demoiselle Théroigne alone does she bear a dim resemblance. Both were gifted with pythian voices and eyes of holy fire—the two priestesses in the Temple of the Revolution that were not vestal virgins. Both were the inspired votaries of rival causes; Fame, the toad-eater, remembers the Minerva of the winning cause—the people's cause—and ignores

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the Magdalene of the lost cause—the tyrant's cause. Théroigne had many divine moments; Eglée had but one brief, triumphant hour of divinity, and then—and then—the fate of mortals that would be gods.

It is strikingly noticeable that those who set out to preach a gospel subservient to orthodoxy carry no scrip in their pockets. Invariably they come from out of the very loins of humanity, and possess some magnetism that provides them with the necessities of life and that still greater necessity to them—a hearing. To Eglée during this week food, clothing, and lodging were alike of no consideration. She appeared insensible to fatigue, and made no attempt to seek money; everything was subservient to her call. The faithful Couchette was the bursar of this extraordinary mission; and to keep them both from starving she begged for food from the back-doors of cafés. Her courage ceased to falter when she saw that the authorities made no effort to arrest them, but she was fully alive to the futility of the daily programme. The perpetual moving on from sunrise to dark, with little to eat and sleeping where night overtook them, was by no means to her taste. It seriously interfered with their only means of living; it was all very well to love the queen and pity her misfortunes, but this sort of thing was absurd. Couchette,

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too, thought that Eglée had gone mad ; but the idea of deserting her friend never occurred to the girl. Her belief in Eglée continued strong, and, mad or sane, Eglée was still able to protect her.

On the seventh afternoon of their crusade, at about the very time that Jean Laforge was seeking the counsel of Manette, the two girls walked slowly along the Rue St. Honoré. Couchette, whose patience was fast being exhausted, was petulantly casting about in her mind how to remonstrate with Eglée. Their novelty had passed ; they no longer excited curiosity, and the municipal guards in the Place du Palais Royal, to whom they had become a nuisance, were rough and menacing. For once Eglée's "Vive la reine !" found no echo in Couchette.

"We've been a week at this," she said sharply, "and the queen is still in the Temple, and will stop there too. It's foolish to think we can do her any good—we !"

"Leave me, if you like," replied Eglée sternly, "I shall go on. Who knows but at the very steps of the scaffold she may be saved ?"

Eglée had scarce finished speaking when yells were heard in the distance. The long, weary day was coming to an end ; the noise which approached was that which accompanied the tumbrils.

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The girls stopped and looked in the direction of the sound.

"The tumbrils are coming," murmured Eglée. Her teeth were clenched, her eyes were dilated, her breast heaved as if some great struggle were going on within her.

Two carts with the evening meal of the guillotine jolted heavily over the cobbles of the Rue St. Honoré. They were surrounded by a posse of municipal guards, while a band of sansculottes followed behind shrieking the Ça-ira and skipping in fiendish glee.

"Vive la reine!" shouted Eglée, as the tumbrils passed.

The mob was as delirious as she was; it instantly enveloped the girls, ready to trample them underfoot.

"Citizens," cried Couchette, in terror, "don't harm her; she is mad!"

The effect on those nearest was instantaneous; it calmed their fury. Eglée, absolutely devoid of fear, began her customary harangue. A score stopped to listen, the rest followed the tumbrils. In the highly excited mood these people were in to listen was to be enthralled. The mesmeric influence of a single word can sway such crowds. A mob is but a wild beast at large: to attempt to frighten it is never to catch it; but it may be, and often is, snared by surprise.

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Like Mark Antony over Cæsar's body, Eglée within five minutes held the little crowd around her. It was hers to the core, and she knew it ; at last, then, the divine moment she had so ardently longed for had come ; the great opportunity, like a winged steed, dashing past her at such a rate ! Can she mount it and curb it ? Alas ! it was not the courage she lacked, but the skill.

"Vive la reine !" pealed her voice after every impassioned period. It was her watchword and on her lips was magical.

The little band, revolution-mad, unaccountable for its actions, took it up. They did not shout it in unison, but irregularly. The cry thus gained an added force ; it was louder, more prolonged, it might have come from a hundred throats.

"Citizens !" shouted the girl, intoxicated with the taste of power, "let us follow the tumbrils to the Place de la Révolution ! The people they carry must not go to their deaths ! What matters it, my friends, who they be—aristocrats, suspects, patriots—it is all one ; they are French men and French women, the sacred blood of France flows in their veins as in ours. Citizens, it is a crime greater than breaking any law of Hébert or Robespierre to spill that blood, that divine blood. What has the Revolu-

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tion done for you, wretches that you are? What has it done for me? We are the people, my friends, the absolute sovereign people; our will must be obeyed. But see the dupes we are! In the name of the Republic our generosity is turned to torture, we are enchanted into devils to run hungry and half-naked through Paris to spill the sacred blood of France that Fouquier-Tinville and his partners may sit in the place of the kings. I tell you, my friends, those men drink the blood that flows from the guillotine, they grow fat on it, and we—we starve! They laugh at us as we run to do their cursed bidding. Let us not stand it any more. No, thrice no, and again thrice no! We are brave, we are merciful, we are the sovereign people. If Hébert defies us we will go to the Jacobins and tear out his heart. To the Place de la Révolution, my friends!”

So Eglée high and ever higher. Just what she intended to do when she had freed the victims she herself did not know. She had seen enough of insurrection to know its power, but in her untutored mind there was no scheme of organisation, only a great blank. Her mother-wit told her that it would be easier to rescue the queen and raze the Temple when once the people had successfully defied the Republic. Beyond this her brain did not, could not work.

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At a swift pace, followed closely by Couchette and between ten and twenty men whose fury she had turned from one channel into another, Eglée dashed into the Place de la Révolution, curiosity swelling her ranks *en route*. The sun was setting and his blood-red rays stained the Statue of Liberty opposite the guillotine and formed a ~~line~~ ^{cone} of fire through the crowd. The tricôteuses and poissardes were seated on benches near the scaffold, knitting, and emptying vials of revolutionary scold. In their midst was Manette. The two tumbrils had halted at the steps of the scaffold, a veritable sea of human beings flowed round them, and in that blood-red sunshine the Place de la Révolution presented a picture that on canvas would have been attributed to the unhealthy and brutalised imagination of a homicidal maniac.

On the raised platform of the guillotine the gigantic figure of Samson loomed forbidding against the fiery evening sky. Already his voice could be heard calling out a number harshly, and a lady of the old Court was preparing to descend from the ~~tumbril~~ ^{tumbril} with superb fortitude. Suddenly above the Ça-ira and the "Vive la révolution!" Eglée's voice rang out with a passionate and ominous "Vive la reine!" and was echoed and re-echoed by those who followed her. By sheer surprise it quelled all the noises round the

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scaffold, and, forcing a passage through the wondering people, Eglée and her band reached the steps leading up to the guillotine. It was a coign of vantage particularly well adapted to her pythian oratory. Once again her expressive and mesmeric voice was uplifted in pure treason ; but nobody attempted to drag her down, to seal her lips with her life, for her time had not yet come, her divinity had not yet forsaken her.

“In the name of the people, hear !” she cried. “I have come, my friends, to bid you remember the watchword of the Republic ; it is Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. I bid you, my friends, remember not justice, but pity. I bid you be generous out of the richness of your sovereignty, generous to the weak, to the unfortunate. Citizens, in the name of the people, I the least of them, I bid you unyoke the horses from these tumbrils. These people must be released, this axe must be buried in the Seine—only then shall France be free. This emblem of death, I say, is a tyrant worse than Louis. It represents not that which shall purge our dear Fatherland of traitors, but the absolute power of the men who lie when they tell us France is free. We are the dupes of the Jacobins, we are barefoot and hungry and very poor that Hébert, Chaumette, and the others may fill their

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bellies and drive in their coaches like aristocrats. They think they can terrify us, but we are the true people from the bowels of the Faubourg, we carry the tocsin in our hearts, we send our dearest ones to die for France on the frontiers. Ah, blood ! blood ! blood ! We are drenched in blood. See ! Liberty herself is reeking with it ! It is a curse on us, a curse on France ! Shall we ever be clean again ? I tell you the Jacobins and the Convention are jesting at our misery ; they have daubed us with blood—it is a magic spell under which we can see nothing, desire nothing but blood. Samson, with thy bloody hands, come down from that scaffold lest we tear thee down ! We are the people and we shall be obeyed. Citizens, I invoke your mercy for these poor wretches more miserable than we are. To the tumbrils, I say ! ”

Eglée’s voice had made its power felt at last. Like all who have ever preached a crusade, words came to her at the appointed time. There was the hum and shuffle of a densely packed crowd as it swayed towards the tumbrils ; the tricôteuses round the scaffold broke into shrill yells. The blood-red ball of the sun had dropped behind the back of the goddess of Liberty casting her long shadow over the people. Eglée still stood on the steps of the guillotine seen of all, shouting, “ Vive la reine ! ” The condemned in the tumbrils,

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in whom at the last moment hope glimmered, like the flame of a candle that flares before it is extinguished, echoed the cry. It sounded like a chant, a death-hymn, like the sublime *Ave Cæsar morituri te salutamus* of the gladiators. But in that raging tumult all its solemn impressiveness was drowned. For a moment it seemed as if the municipal guards would stampede, but they recovered their presence of mind even before it was lost. Grouped round the tumbrils against which they were pressed, they formed a hedge of bayonets, dashing on which, like the sea on jagged reefs, the mob recoiled in angry, broken waves. And the Place de la Révolution became a howling waste in which Eglée's demonised followers drifted with purpose undefined.

In the midst of the confusion it was impossible to judge its extent. With the "Vive la reine!" was mingled "Vive la révolution!" and the municipal guards knew not whether they were protecting the condemned in the tumbrils from massacre or preventing their rescue. But Samson, raised above the raging multitude, smiled sardonically; he looked down into the seething square and saw what no one else could see. He saw Eglée's half-score of men shiver back from the bayonets, and he saw a tumultuous crowd gone rabid with curiosity and excitement. To him

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it was merely a bubble bursting, an *émeute* of the Terror, the spasm of a frantic people.

Eglée's insurrection, born out of rhetoric and madness, was dying at its birth from lack of its natural nourishment—organisation. The girl realised the situation as clearly as Samson. To recover her power was impossible ; it was shouted and trampled away in that maniac mob. Once more she knew that without brains neither courage nor faith are of any account. At the hour when Fate had put itself into her hands she had acted with it like a *tricôteuse*. Marie Antoinette was still in the Temple, enchanted there ; and she, like Toulan, had failed to break the spell. The game was up ; it had been badly played, and in this last blaze of emotion her pythian inspiration burnt itself out.

Eglée turned away from the guillotine as if she had awakened from a dream. She was not a popular leader whose sceptre had vanished, but an atom in the raging tumult. She knew she was to blame for this riot ; she knew that even her degradation would ~~not~~ ^{not} safeguard her now ; and with haughty contempt she drifted silently into the thick of the crowd. Couchette, blanched with fear, followed her. Samson, leaning over the rail of the scaffold, had whispered in her ear, "Citoyenne, Sainte Guillotine hears no prayers."

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What did he mean? His voice sounded like the thud of the axe on a victim's neck, and there was the scent of fresh blood in her nostrils.

In his search for Manette Jean Laforge arrived in the Place de la Révolution simultaneously with Eglée. He saw his opportunity at a glance. Eglée was breaking the law; it was preposterous to think she could overturn the Republic. To be the first to inform against her would be to prove his patriotism beyond dispute. And on legs swifter than Atalanta's he had hastened to the Committee of Public Safety with the news.

A company of soldiers anxiously despatched arrived on the scene of the tumult and cleared a broad way to the scaffold. The power that has order and system behind it asserted itself instantaneously. Like magic the Place de la Révolution was brushed smooth. There was the rattle of musketry on the cobble pavement, and once more Samson's voice could be heard calling his victims by number. The tumbrils were unloaded, with despatch, and the well-known sound of the guillotine smote the air—systole, diastole. Swept into the approaches of the Place de la Révolution, the lately riotous crowd looked on afar apathetically.

Suddenly the unnatural calm of the people was

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broken by a voice full of mockery. It was so penetrating that even Samson on the scaffold heard it and turned.

“Citizens! Brothers! Canaille!” it called, and between each word there was a prolonged and brazen laugh of derision.

For a moment, on the fringe of the people pressed by the soldiers against the railings of the Garden of the Tuileries, the commanding figure of the fille de joie of the Faubourg was visible. Instantly, as if a cloud had enveloped her, she disappeared. Systole; diastole went the guillotine as before, mingled now with the shrieks and curses of women. And in the sombre September twilight a tassel of the fringe that bordered the Place de la Révolution could be seen shaken violently. The priestess of royalty and her acolyte were in the hands of the tricôteuses.

With one arm round Couchette, who clung frantically to her, Eglée fought for her life. Her splendid strength and fearlessness were her only weapons, but the broils of the people in the Faubourg had skilled her in the use of them. Fists were raised in her face but with her free arm Eglée knocked them down; hands seized her by the skirt, but she kicked them wrathfully away, leaving long ribbons in the unyielding fingers. A woman made a lunge at her

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breast with a knife. It was Manette, livid with hate, which made her unwary. But Eglée was on the alert, and, gripping the hag by the wrist, she squeezed the weapon out of her claws. Then like a hawk she picked up the knife, and brandishing it and kicking and struggling and cursing, she dragged herself and Couchette free at last. Their freedom was of short duration. As the two girls stood panting and trembling from the life-and-death struggle, wondering whither they should flee, they were snared in the fast gathering darkness by soldiers, who quietly surrounded them.

“Ah, my pretties,” said one banteringly, “we bring you an invitation in the name of the Republic to be its guest in the Conciergerie.”

CHAPTER VI

THE SALON OF MADAME DE NOAILLES

AT this epoch no promenade in Paris presented so gay an appearance as the court of the Conciergerie at midday. It contained all that was left in France of the old *régime*, and resembled a caravanseraï of fashion rather than a prison. Here was preserved that tradition of manners which the beauties and gallants of the old Court had developed into a fine art ; and in this ante-chamber of Death the aristocrats carried themselves as formerly they had in their heyday in the *Œil-de-Bœuf*. Most of them when arrested had brought with them money and clothing, and by dint of extreme economy and care managed to maintain a degree of elegance. Nor did the Republic interfere with the luxurious mode of the Conciergerie, which was in vogue in all the other prisons as well, and was in striking contrast with its

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own strict and severe simplicity. . It was as if the Republic considered fine clothes and gay manners as part of the aristocrat nature, which nothing could change any more than the leopard can change his spots. Yet there was something inexpressibly tragic in it all ; for pose that it was it was sincere, and the First Estate successfully played to the end the part it had always played, and that had made the noblesse of France the most distinguished caste in Europe.

The aristocrats of the Conciergerie were the *revers de médaille* of the aristocrats at Versailles. They turned the prison, whose exit was the guillotine, into a parterre of flowers framed in iron. The mighty Revolution had overthrown old France, breaking it to pieces, but these fragments in the Conciergerie, like the fragments of antique marbles, still showed traces of what the splendour of the past must have been at meridian. Terribly fallen from their haughty estate, counted as a class accursed, humiliated to a torturing degree, these aristocrats, at the mercy of the Republic, preserved intact their gay composure or indifferent disdain, and displayed a nerve that never trembled. Of all the many wonderful tableaux in the drama of the Revolution none is more picturesque than the fall of the aristocrats. If it is possible to live down a past they succeeded, and sentimental posterity thinks

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less of their follies, which in them were criminal abuses of rank, than of their heroic attitude in the day of retribution. The most frivolous learnt wisdom, the most faint-hearted acquired courage, and all as if it were the mark of their caste went to the guillotine with an intrepidity that has no match. They may be called the first trade union; one idea like an oath bound all—loyalty to royalism; their watchword was *Vive le roi!* and their banner a coat-of-arms.

The common criminals, of whom there was always a goodly sprinkling in the Conciergerie, placed there by the Republic to still further degrade the aristocrats, quickly recognised their own inferiority, and in the common danger were not only respectful but even volunteered to act as the servants of *Monsieur le Duc* or *Madame la Maréchale*. So the wrath of the Republic knew no bounds, and Fouquier-Tinville, with whom a plot was a fixed idea, was never at a loss where to discover one.

It was into such a world that *Eglée* and *Couchette* were now ushered, as another insult to the great ladies of France—two rank weeds in the garden of roses to spread there and choke out the fragrance with the overpowering stench of the gutters of the Faubourg St. Antoine. The extreme novelty of the arrival of two such young girls, stamped with the unmistakable

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- seal of the people, aroused the curiosity of the aristocrats. For many of them having waited long to draw the grand prize in Fouquier's guillotine lottery, were devoured by *ennui* even in the Conciergerie—the old familiar *ennui* of Versailles. It was a habit of the prison to ask every new arrival the cause of arrest ; and when it was known that these two girls had instigated a riot in the Place de la Révolution in an effort to rescue the victims in the tumbrils, the eagerness to hear their story was unbounded.

There was no vulgar crowding round the girls, no show at all of curiosity, no attempt at familiarity ; it was not in this way these aristocrats sought to amuse themselves. There was a proper way to do things, and they would sanction no innovation of the Revolution that would buttonhole a fille de joie because she was a companion in misfortune. Eglée and Couchette should be invited to tell their stories with that condescension which the aristocrats knew so well to make appear as if they were receiving a favour instead of conferring one. Etiquette should be maintained ; and Madame la Duchesse de Noailles, as the lady of highest rank, was asked to hold a salon in the court of the Conciergerie. A certain Comte de Beugnot, known before the Revolution, as well as through it and after it, as a man of tact—possessing

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this quality to a superlative degree, and owing to it the success of a very dramatic career—was chosen as master of ceremonies to Madame de Noailles.

He approached Eglée and Couchette, who were crouching in a corner of the court and watching the inmates with the greatest curiosity, and entered into conversation with them. The girls were abashed and answered him shyly, but he soon put them at their ease. Their answers to his questions excited in turn his own curiosity, and with great tact he broached the subject of their imprisonment. He feared lest natural timidity might make them reluctant to become the observed of all observers for a few minutes in the Conciergerie.

“It is one of our customs here,” he said, “for each new arrival to tell the prison the reason of his or her arrest. You see, in this gloomy place life is so full of *ennui* that even the most trivial excitement amuses us. Now, Madame la Duchesse de Noailles holds a salon to-day and will be honoured if you will attend it and tell us all how you happen to be here. It will help to drive away our *ennui*, and perhaps it will interest you too to see what your companions in misfortune are like.”

The Comte de Beugnot addressed Eglée, for he saw at a glance that she and not Couchette was the

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more important of the two. Any slight shyness that Eglée had at first felt in the presence of a man of such elegant address as de Beugnot quickly passed. Her self-confidence was never long lost, for above all things she was perfectly natural.

"A salon?" she echoed in surprise, "here?"

The significance of a salon was quite understood by both girls, for in France the knowledge of the people as to the life led by the aristocrats had become surprisingly familiar.

"Yes," smiled the Comte de Beugnot, "you see, it is a tradition with us to listen to tales such as yours is sure to be in salons. We can hardly be expected to follow the fashion of the Revolution in such matters as we do not even know it. Will you honour us, mademoiselle?"

And Eglée, in a state of dreamy wonder, permitted herself to be presented to Madame de Noailles.

Never before, and never after, did the Conciergerie present so picturesque an appearance. On a rude wooden chair in the centre of the court sat Madame de Noailles, patrician and affable; on both sides of her in a semi-circle, some standing, some sitting, were the ladies and gentlemen of the prison, elegantly appressed in the mode of the Court of the Tuileries. In striking contrast to the well-bred manner of these prisoners

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of rank was the sullen demeanour of the thieves, the forgers, the murderers, incarcerated along with them, who stood in the background in knots of two or three. As in a picture in which the interest of every detail leads up to and centres upon the chief incident, or soul of the canvas, stood the imposing figure of Eglée in the foreground. At her feet crouched Couchette, wide-eyed and shrinking ; and immediately behind the girl of the people, on whom the gaze of all was fixed, was a massive stone pillar, grim and grey and strong, in itself alone suggesting the prison gloom. It was a scene that David might have painted, a picture that would arrest attention as one of the dramatic episodes of the Great French Revolution.

For repose of etiquette this salon of Madame la Duchesse de Noailles might have been the salon of Madame Necker or Madame du Deffand. For novelty of interest and tragic originality it has not its counterpart in history.

"It is very good of you to satisfy our curiosity," said Madame de Noailles, with a bright glance. "In the prisons at least the Fraternity of the Revolution is accomplished, a common danger unites us all. Will you tell us your story, mademoiselle ? We shall be most attentive."

The grace with which Madame de Noailles said

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this had an indescribable effect on Eglée. She who had been accustomed all her life to the coarse epithets of the Faubourg now for the first time heard herself addressed in the genteel speech of the aristocrats. She was in the midst of those people of whom her romantic imagination had made its *beau-ideal*—the people of the masked ball and Trianon, the people of the tumbrils, a wondrous people whose reality was more fascinating to her than the dream. She was not shy now, but quite the contrary; she felt like declaring aloud her admiration.

“You wish to know how I, so poor, came to be arrested? It is not a long story, madame. They arrested me, the dogs, for shouting ‘Vive la reine!’ and inciting the mob to release the wretches in the tumbrils. As far back as I can remember I heard nothing but curses on the aristocrats and the Royal Family, and as I had never seen them nor been further than the Bastille, which frightened me, I believed all I heard. But one day my foster-brother and lover—a curse on him for a coward!—went to be lackey in the Hôtel d’Amboise, and whenever he came back to the Faubourg he was always talking of the aristocrats and their doings, and he promised to take me to a masked ball at the Opera, where he said I could see them. I made him keep his promise, and the night we went to

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the ball a most lovely lady lost her mask. I was quite close to her and saw her well—oh! she was lovely! An aristocrat was with her, and he took off his own mask and gave it to her to put on, for she was very angry; and Jean told me that the lady was the queen and the gentleman was his master, the Duc d'Amboise. I had never dreamt there could be people so beautiful as they were, for I had never before been out of the Faubourg, where everybody is ugly. I could never get them out of my thoughts; and then Jean—he was good to me in those days, the cowardly dog—took me to Versailles, where he said I might perhaps get another sight of the beautiful queen. And while we were strolling in the park we fell asleep in the shade—for we stopped to rest, and it was very hot—and two aristocrats passed and woke us and made jokes about us. They asked me if I wished to see the queen and took me away with them to Trianon, and there I did see her and talked to her. I was not accustomed to such grand people, they frightened me—for I was only a child—and I said something that made them all angry, but the queen was good to me and she wouldn't let them hurt me, and she spoke to me, oh, so sweetly. I can never forget it. She was very beautiful, more beautiful than at the ball, and she looked so unhappy that I began to cry and my fear

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left me. Then something got into my heart that I had never felt there before. I did not know what it was then, but I do now ; it was love for her. I love her, and I would willingly die for her."

At this moment there was a rattling of heavy bolts and a municipal guard, armed to the teeth, stood in the open doorway of the court of the Conciergerie and called in a thin, shrill voice—

"Number fifty-three !"

A tall, richly dressed man of middle-age, who had been listening to Eglée with apparent interest, stepped in front of Madame de Noailles and said to her—

"A thousand pardons, madame, for interrupting Mademoiselle Eglée in her thrilling narrative, but may I crave your permission to withdraw ?"

Madame de Noailles gave him her hand, which he kissed, then bowing to the others he withdrew as if he were leaving a *soirée* at Versailles. No one showed the slightest emotion at his departure, though they knew full well what it meant. Eglée and Couchette knew, too, by instinct that he was answering the call of Death, and they watched him with a horrible fascination till he disappeared and the door had clanked back and the heavy bolts were drawn. Then they stared blankly at Madame de Noailles and the others. How was it possible for

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aristocrats should never show the Republic they are afraid—that is the triumph it seeks, not liberty. A week ago in my despair a chance came to me—to me, Eglée—to save the queen. Jean came back ill from the army, and they put him on duty at the Temple. When I heard it I said, ‘This is my chance, Jean and I between us will save her; I will give my degradation, which puts me beyond suspicion, and my life, and Jean shall find the brains to work it into a plot.’ I knew he hated the Republic, for it is a hard master, and Jean was happy when he was a lackey for all he pretended to curse aristocrats, and he never dreamt what the Revolution would become. I trusted to him to help me, but, my God! he would not; he is the greatest liar and coward in France. He is afraid he will be suspected, and to save his own skin he actually wanted me to testify against the queen! Oh, madame, did you ever hear of such a monstrosity? We two were to make up lies about her and swear they were true. It was a foul plot, selfish and foul, for me to be used to save him at the cost of my dear queen. I could have killed him, and if I had had a knife at hand I should certainly have done so, he would never have left my cellar alive that night. It drove me mad. Ah! ah! when my hopes had been so high, when I was so certain of him, the dog! But even then I did

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Not despair ; I bethought myself of another final chance. I would walk the streets of Paris from end to end shouting, 'Vive la reine !' It would draw a crowd, for it is treason to the vile Republic ; people would come to me to know what I meant, and then I would talk to them of the queen ; and God is good, He would help me to say words that would make armed men spring up to save her. I did this, madame—for one week I did it. The cowardly Republic dared not prevent me for fear of ridicule, for who was I to be of any importance ? I did it through all Paris : I shouted it at the door of the Convention, under the windows of the Temple, that the poor queen might hear it and take heart ; I screamed it from the galleries of the Jacobins ; and it was all useless—they thought me a poor, harmless lunatic. But yesterday the luck changed, a wonderful thing happened. The tumbrils passed me on their way to the guillotine. As they passed I cried, 'Vive la reine !' I spoke to the people ; I fired them ; they followed me to the Place de la Révolution to release the poor creatures in the tumbrils and to throw the guillotine into the Seine. It was like when the tocsin sounds. I had won at last, for that mob was mine ; God had had put it into my hands. But oh, madame, madame, my power slipped through my fingers like water ! I

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lacked the brains to know how to use it : brains, that is the thing—brains, brains ! The tricôteuses turned on me and Couchette, who is my friend and loves the queen too. Eh, Couchette, girl ? Ah, but little they knew Eglée. I was a match for them all, for I am strong as a giant, and I was not afraid. Afraid of their noisy yells ?—not Eglée. And here I am ! ”

She stopped breathlessly, and turning her face to the pillar against which she stood bowed her head on her arm. Her wild, impassioned oratory, the crude sincerity of her manner acted like a spell. The salon of Madame de Noailles was thrilled out of its levity. Here was something that rang true. This girl of the people, rude and rough as she was, had a heart as loyal as any of them all. And the pathos of it was deep and tragic.

The court of the Conciergerie was silent for the time ; the very criminals in the background were moved ; the municipal guards on duty slunk sheepishly out of evidence as if they blushed for the Republic. Eglée’s personality had enthralled them all. The aristocrats respected her ; she seemed to have done more than they had done for the cause. It was but little, insignificant, but she had done what she could ; its effect was like the mite of the widow. Madame la Duchesse de Noailles, aristocrat to the core, had done

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- nothing in comparison. She rose from her seat, and going up to Eglée put her arm round the girl's waist and kissed her.

"You are a brave and noble girl; I am proud to know you," she whispered.

Madame de Noailles' words, her action, the fact that she was who she was, was like the straw that broke the camel's back to Eglée. The girl broke down completely. The great strain of the past week had exhausted her, and the scene with the tricôteuses had told on her, for scoff at it as she might it had been one fraught with the greatest danger. And now to augment the nervous excitement of this came the sympathy of the aristocrats that all her life she had secretly hungered for. It melted her, and she broke into a torrent of sobs that sounded piteously in that grim court of death.

"Hush, hush, my dear," said Madame de Noailles, "you must not give way; you are with friends now, and will need all your courage to face the Revolutionary Tribunal."

And this woman who had once been one of the greatest ladies in France, tried to soothe the girl who was at the extreme end of the social scale from her.

Two ladies came to her assistance, and between them they led the girl behind the women's grille.

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“Oh, madame,” was all Eglée could ejaculate,
“you are good, you are good—I love you!”

For Nature is very capricious, and sometimes plants her tenderest flower, love of goodness, in the rudest soil.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE CONCIERGERIE

ON the next day Eglée, who had regained her wonted composure, was sitting on a stool in the court of the Conciergerie looking idly about her, when she was addressed by a young man, whose appearance bore the unmistakable stamp of the aristocrat.

“In your story yesterday,” he said, “you mentioned seeing the Duc d’Amboise at a masked ball some years ago when the queen lost her mask. I am the Duc d’Amboise.”

Eglée stared at him.

“You don’t recognise me, of course,” he said, with an air of irritation, “I am hardly the same man I was five years ago. The Revolution changes everything. Yes, I remember now the incident of the child de Vaudreuil brought to Trianon and who told the

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queen some truths about herself she didn't know before. So you were that child? You have a wonderful voice, mademoiselle; the five years have not changed that."

"And you, monsieur, are the Duc d'Amboise?" said Eglée, passing her hand before her eyes, as if brushing away some mist that dimmed them. "How—how did you come here, monsieur? I thought you were with the Emigrés safe on the other side of the Rhine. Oh, monsieur, I am so sorry for you. You were the first aristocrat I ever saw," and Eglée looked at him wistfully.

"Yes, I was an Emigré. France says to the Emigrés, 'Return if you dare!' I returned, and you find me here, caught like a rat in a trap."

The Duc d'Amboise shrugged his shoulders,

"But, monsieur," said Eglée, "why did you return? Why did you not stop where you were safe?"

"The same motive brought me back to Paris that tempted you to shout 'Vive la reine!'"

"You mean that you came to save the queen?" murmured Eglée, looking at him with a brilliant gaze.

"I was sent by the Comte d'Artois to bribe Marat to effect the queen's release. The same day I arrived in Paris Marat died; my mission was, of

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course, fruitless. I was caught creeping through the porter's gate of my hôtel in the Rue de Lille and brought here."

"Oh, monsieur, it was brave of you to risk your life for the queen. You are the bravest man I have ever met." And Eglée looked at him with unfeigned admiration.

"Such bravery is worthless; better be a coward than to be insulted by Fouquier and sent to the guillotine."

There was something in his manner that Eglée could not understand. She said nothing.

"I have no reason to love life," he went on. "The loser pays and I have lost—lost everything—wealth, youth, friends, even pride—and now I am losing my life. When I had all that I wasted it, I have squandered my very name. It is a proud and ancient one, mademoiselle. St. Louis made my ancestor a duke before the walls of Jerusalem; and I—what have I done for the grand old line? Nothing, but to end it shamefully on the scaffold."

He spoke bitterly and looked at Eglée almost defiantly.

"You have been true to the Bourbons at any rate," she said.

As if by intuition she struck the keynote of his

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character—pride of rank. Her words were the very comfort he desired, the only comfort he would have accepted. This girl seemed to understand him, he felt drawn to her.

“It’s the trade of a royalist to follow the king ; and the way to the guillotine should be easy because it is fashionable—I see what you mean.” And the Duc d’Amboise walked abruptly away, leaving Eglée lost in exceeding wonder and pity. Never had she so fully realised the force of the Revolution till this moment when in this embittered man, blighted in the flower of his youth by early dissipation, she saw her old ideal of manly beauty stripped of his glamour, fallen from his high estate. The shock to her was as great as if she had seen in the flesh the woman David painted in the Conciergerie and was told it was the queen she had seen at Trianon.

Such a nature as Eglée’s, in which the instincts are slowly awakened and ideas are crudely and powerfully formed, was not one to lightly submit to subversion. The old unaccountable child’s interest in this man still continued keen ; but it was no longer reverent. That wonderfully beautiful god of the masked ball and Trianon lost his divinity in her eyes and became a man. She still regarded him as immeasurably her superior, for in her royalist opinions Eglée was utterly

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unreasonable, but he seemed now nearer her own level. In the confined space of the court of the Conciergerie she was thrown into close contact with him and got to know him as he was and not as she had romantically imagined him.

*The Duc d'Amboise by no means belonged to the *Philosophe noblesse*. Till the Emigration the *leit motif* of his life had been pleasure ; his sole occupation the attempt to discover new sensations ; more *insouciant* creature of an *insouciant* Court there did not exist. But the Revolution had rudely ploughed up the parterre in which he bloomed. The gay young lord for whose sole pleasure the round world was made, the handsome gallant of inexhaustible revenues, of bright clever wit, of vice refined seven times of all its grossness, of intrigue and charming debauchery, the corruption of corruption, had left France in the haughty huff of the First Emigration. But France was not put to shame by the stampede of its noblesse over the marches. The Duc d'Amboise could not take his vast territorial wealth with him, and the people burnt his château in Amboise and the State stamped the ashlar wall of his Paris hôtel with its motto—Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity ; and his broad acres were confiscated and his name proscribed. He joined the king's brothers at Coblenz and added

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to the poltroonery and imbecility of the Emigrés his great name, now slender purse, and the debonair froth of his youth. As he had been the typical aristocrat of the Court of Versailles, so he now became the typical Emigré who learnt nothing and forgot nothing. All his glitter tarnished by exile, he grew arrogant, revengeful, and soured, refusing to acknowledge facts though like a highwayman they caught him by the throat. To him and to all his kind France was a land forbid.

But there was in him, though he was quite unaware of it, the quality of earnestness, which great misfortune alone could arouse. The life of the Emigrés on the Rhine was anything but *couleur de rose*. As the Revolution proceeded their supplies grew less and less, and finally altogether ceased. No class of people was ever more suddenly and completely ruined, and Coblenz became full of jealousies, dissensions, and discontent. The Duc d'Amboise, smarting under poverty and exile, longed to return to France and find it the bed of roses he had known. He tried to kill his *ennui* and vexation by taking an interest in affairs. Very young and utterly inexperienced, he was full of reckless schemes, of plots—ready to dare anything. The Comte d'Artois was for ever talking of re-entering France at the head of a royalist army, of

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even visiting Paris in disguise, but when the time came he reflected twice. So ~~the~~ Duc d'Amboise fretted on the Rhine poorer, more revengeful, more discontented till he undertook, in a rash hour, to buy Marat to save the queen. It was a step fraught with the greatest danger to him, but he was by no means devoid of courage; moreover, Marie Antoinette had in him almost her only supporter among the Emigrés, who looked upon her as the cause of all their woes, and till the Monarchy fell showered her with lampoons and vilification. The friends and popularity of that for ever memorable and picturesque heyday of her life deserted her in her supreme need. Only a handful of the hearts that she had won remained to her, but these were as true as steel. Unlike most of the Emigrés, the Duc d'Amboise was more chivalrous than selfish. With the hot daring of youth, which is often mistaken for courage, he tried to save her and failed. It made him sullen, haughty, and contemptuous. He cursed himself and France, and was an utterly disillusioned man. In the Conciergerie his state of mind was precisely like that of one who gets up ruined from a gaming-table. The gaiety and attempt to throw off care affected by his caste jarred on him. The arrival of Eglée and the strangeness of her arrest awoke his sullen interest. In spite of

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himself her personality influenced him. Her fearlessness and contempt excited his admiration, and the sincerity of her devotion to the queen struck a sympathetic chord in his own nature.

If he seemed to take a malicious delight in disillusioning her of her royalist views, it was perhaps for the sake of hearing the cause so dear to him defended; for nothing could shake Eglée out of her opinions.

"You admire us aristocrats, mademoiselle," he said, with the bitterness he unsuccessfully tried to make appear cynicism. "If you knew us as well as I do you would not have jeopardised yourself as you have done. Believe me, we are not worth it. We are the most frivolous fools that ever chanced to have power, and we played with our toy in a foolish way till we broke it. In blaming the aristocrats I blame myself equally. Do you know, strange as it may seem, I am not sorry I am here. I shall hail with delight the day I go to the guillotine. At my trial I shall take every opportunity to ruin any chance I may have of acquittal. I have lived my life, and now too late I know what a failure it has been. The old times can never come again; and even if an absolute Bourbon and a spendthrift noblesse were once more reinstalled at Versailles it would not be the same, for I should be different. I tell you, mademoiselle, we

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aristocrats were the biggest bubble ever pricked ; we are not worth a sigh, much less your heroic devotion."

"Ah, M. le Duc," replied Eglée, "I don't think you mean a word you say. At least, I do not believe you, and you will never make me change my views. I have never been so happy in my life as since I have been in the Conciergerie. The aristocrats here treat me so kindly, they almost make me forget what I am in the delight of living among them. Ah, that is a terrible thought, that I cannot change my past ! You have no idea how vile I am ; only the Faubourg knows, and it treats me as I deserve."

Eglée's voice always expressed what she felt ; the Duc d'Amboise looked at her curiously and said kindly—

"I could almost feel sorry for you, mademoiselle."

She interrupted him fiercely—

"I am not mademoiselle—you mock me. I am plain Eglée, a fille de joie !"

"Eglée," he said gently, for once without any bitterness—"Eglée—it is nicer than mademoiselle. Thank you, Eglée, for letting me call you by your name. I like you for your fidelity to the queen. You are an example to us all in loyalty. If you will let me I should like to be your friend till Fouquier-Tinville sends for me."

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He looked at her seriously, waiting her answer. She felt a strange émotion that she had never before experienced. It seemed to her very natural that he should wish to be her friend, yet very, very odd. He was the Duc d'Amboise and she was a fille de joie, and what a vast difference between them ! She could not meet his gaze, she dared not trust herself to speak ; she felt afraid.

"You are not angry with me, surely, Eglée ?" he asked in a gentle, half-sorrowful way. "By friend, I mean you no harm, believe me. But I am such a cross-grained, disappointed fellow, and you are just the reverse, and I like to talk to you."

Eglée raised her eyes and looked at him ; there was no mistaking his sincerity.

"M. le Duc," she said, with a sort of dignity that became her, "it is such as I who ought to claim the protection of such as you. But the Revolution has upset everything, I see ; and if a poor girl like me can do anything to lighten the great grief of the first aristocrat she ever saw and a friend of the queen, she will do what she can."

"Your hand on it, Eglée. A cur that has been kicked out of its fine kennel goes whining—that's me. It is grateful to any one that speaks kindly to it."

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The Duc d'Amboise was a weak man. The thrusts of Fate he first resented, then, as that was of no avail, he received them, not with outcry, but sullenly, and finally with fatalistic despair. He never by any means had sought to face them with bold defiance or noble courage. Such weakness is always pitiful, but nevertheless when the man is handsome and possesses a certain charm that appeals to one, his weakness of character is completely lost sight of in the qualities that draw one to him. Eglée gave him her hand, and on such terms a friendship was formed between them.

The meaning of imprisonment in the Conciergerie in nowise troubled her. She considered that the Republic had conferred a great honour on her by arresting her. Nothing in the world could ever make her an aristocrat ; in her opinion that was something one had to be born. She never forgot she was a fille de joie of the Faubourg, and had never dreamt of aspiring to be called a royalist. But she felt that the Conciergerie, where she was in the midst of aristocrats who completely ignored her past, gave her the royalist *cachet*. So much can a fixed idea do for one.

The influence of the aristocrats' society was the very soil Eglée needed in which to flourish. Her fierce, almost brutal manner became wonderfully

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toned ; it was caused chiefly by contempt, and in the Conciergerie there was nothing to excite that emotion. Her fearless deportment, her staunch loyalty to the queen, her marked personality, gave her an authority in the prison. There was a sense of protection about her that those who came in friendly contact with her experienced. With all their butterfly gaiety the aristocrats had their moments of depression ; but Eglée had nothing to regret, for life had never been so luxurious to her before. Her brave and fearless manner acted as a tonic to the others. When the butterfly-wings grew tired and the butterflies fainted, beaten down to the earth by terror, it was Eglée who revived them. In spite of her origin she was the strongest character of them all.

All the aristocrats were drawn to her, and some, like Madame de Noailles, honoured her with marks of their affection and esteem. The Comte de Beugnot in particular regarded her with the greatest interest. The novelty of her strong personality broke the *ennui* of his prison life. She was to him a new sensation, a curious experience in human nature, a study which he pursued with zest. Perhaps in the whole Conciergerie there was not to be found a greater contrast than the girl of the Faubourg and this academic aristocrat, whose *aplomb*, whose serene self-possession were

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incapable of being shaken. Many years older than the Duc d'Amboise, he belonged to the serious and thoughtful side of the noblesse. Trained in the philosophy of Voltaire, he was an aristocrat because it was his caste, but he was also a man of the world and a cynic. Such pure loyalty as Eglée he was incapable of feeling. To him the divine right of kings was a ridiculous pretension; privately he had a great contempt for the king and the pitiable weakness of the Monarchy. Before the Revolution he was known as an Anglo-maniac and was believed to hold very radical and subversive political views. He hailed the States-General with delight, and was one of the first to suggest that the prerogatives of the sovereign should be defined. The party with which he identified himself was the Constitutional whose honesty turned into duplicity. For neither the Court nor the people had he any reverence, his sole care was the effort to establish the constitution which was to him an abstract ideal. But no State has ever been governed by ideals, and the impatient Revolution swept him and his party away. He was arrested as a Suspect and thrown into the Conciergerie, where perforce the overwhelming misfortunes of the noblesse and Marie Antoinette, whom in the day of her splendour he had never liked, called forth his humanity if not his sympathy. He

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pitied her and his aristocrat friends as one pities any one who suffers. The renovation of France, the government of it, interested him as an experiment one makes in science. He was a *Philosophe* aristocrat and more dangerous to the old *régime* than all the corruption of the thoughtless, pleasure-at-any-cost noblesse. In his soulless cynicism, in his speculative and condescending philanthropy, he carelessly knocked from under existing things all supports and was surprised to find in the crash that he came down too. Have a revolution by all means, it is necessary in the pass to which things have come, only we will do it in the genteel aristocrat way ; no shocking surprises, no letting loose a canaille Democracy with its guillotine and terror which you can't catch again and chain up. To put fear into such a man was impossible, he was too cynically cool ; depth of character with sincerity at the bottom was not in him, neither respect for nor belief in anything or anybody. For the rest he was a gentleman, polished and charming.

Eglée interested this man ; she was to him an anomaly, and he liked to study her.

"Aristocracy, indeed !" he reflected. "What a general overthrow is this when a girl of the streets makes it her nest and fights for it with a heroism that none of the virtuosos of the salons of Coblentz would have been capable of !"

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But with all his wit and education he did not understand Eglée. Nor did she in the least understand him. His cynicism, his irony, his cool, well-bred self-possession made him seem vastly her superior; to her he was the repository of all learning, which simple and uneducated people always respect. She regarded him as an aristocrat of the first water whose place must have been very near the throne, and she readily distinguished the difference between him and the Duc d'Amboise. The word of the one was to her like an oracle, the word of the other that of a mere human being.

One day, seeing Eglée trying to soothe Couchette, who was recovering from a paroxysm of terror, to frequent attacks of which she was now subject, the Comte de Beugnot offered his sympathy.

"Your fear is quite unreasonable, child," he said kindly, "I will wager anything you will get out of this all right. You see, Fouquier is too much absorbed with his aristocratic acquaintances to think of you. And then the guillotine is not half so dreadful as you fancy, it is all over in a moment. I assure you my friends who drive away from here in the tumbrils are quite cool over it. The guillotine really confirms our patents of nobility, and we confer the greatest honour on the Republic by leaving our coats-of-arms on the scaffold."

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Such comfort; while it might salve his own qualms, was utterly lost on Couchette. Her only solace was in the presence of Eglée, everything else was a frightful phantasmagoria; the Conciergerie, the gay aristocrats, their coming in and going out, the Revolutionary Tribunal, and the guillotine were a confused and hideous dream in which only Eglée was real.

A fortnight after the imprisonment of the two girls a rumour ran that the queen had arrived over night and was confined in one of the cells. The news excited the whole prison and threw Eglée into a feverish excitement.

Was the Queen of France to appear in the court of the Conciergerie like all the rest? Was she at last to see Marie Antoinette face to face, to tell her that from that day at Trianon there had been of all her subjects not one more devoted than herself? to fall at her sacred feet as at the feet of God, to lament her as His faithful followers lamented Christ on the cross? But the queen did not appear. The whole of that day Eglée was steeped in dull despair. She listened to Madame de Noailles' kindly sympathy without heed; her only reply in a deeply scornful voice was—

“How do you expect me to be cheerful, madame? Don't you know the queen is dying?”

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The Duc d'Amboise approached her and said cheerfully—

“Eglée, my girl, take heart ; we are all down in the dumps when you are out of sorts. The queen ——”

Eglée turned on him fiercely with tears of rage and grief in her splendid eyes.

“I love her far more than you or any of you here, though you are aristocrats and I am only a girl of the streets. If I had had your brains, M. le Duc, I should not have failed to save her !”

The young aristocrat shrugged his shoulders and walked away, and Eglée sank back again into her apathy.

The martyrdom of Marie Antoinette was to the girl a veritable Calvary. She longed for the queen to know that she had done what she could, that her loyalty had never wavered.

For the pathos of this strange attachment lay in the fact that it was one-sided.

The following day many of the prisoners began to disparage the queen, accusing her of shameful crimes, of being the cause of the Revolution and their own misfortunes. Then Eglée roused herself from her apathy. In a terrible voice she commanded silence, and threatened to fight any one who dared say one

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word in her hearing against the august martyr. By sheer force of character she intimidated the prisoners and put a stop to the shameful inhumanity of adding their mean prison taunts to the woes of the tragically fated queen. Those who had spoken against her idol Eglée observed, and never after addressed them by word or look.

The Comte de Beugnot brought her the news that the Baron de Batz had tried, even at the last moment, to rescue the queen from the Conciergerie, and that his plot had failed.

"God Himself seems to have deserted her, Eglée," he said. "Who would have fancied that Louis XVI.'s beautiful queen, as I remember her twenty years ago, would ever come to this? It is too horrible a contrast. Ah well, France can claim the glory of having possessed, though of foreign birth, the most picturesque queens in history — Marie Stuart and Marie Antoinette."

Eglée had no idea who the former was, but the Comte de Beugnot was undoubtedly a man of great learning and knew what he was saying; at any rate he pitied the queen, and Eglée liked him. He used to chat with the guards in the Conciergerie, and by diplomatic subterfuge picked up a great deal of news. The same day he came to Eglée again and said—

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"My poor girl, I have bad news for you, it will require all your courage to bear it."

"Ah, M. le Comte, no news is so bad as that which I have already heard of our dear queen being here. Speak, my courage is like myself, healthy, it never faints."

"I hear Chaumette is planning to insult the queen and to show the people that the hated Austrian has been degraded to the last."

"Is there no Charlotte Corday to be found to turn round a knife in his heart?" she asked wildly. De Beugnot continued—

"Chaumette has proposed to summon you and Couchette before the Tribunal and condemn you for plotting to save the queen, and to send her to the guillotine in the same tumbril with both of you. That is my bad news."

"Oh, the dog!" cried Eglée. "I see the insult. The Queen of France and two filles de joie to go to the Place de la Révolution together. But the queen is so far above us all that the insult will not sting her. I will tell the people that I die gladly for her, and that to go to the guillotine like that is to make me feel like a Princess of the Blood!"

But Chaumette's maliciously cruel joke was ruled out of order by the Tribunal, and the girls were not sent for.

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On the next day there reached the court of the Conciergerie a muffled roar like thunder far off. All started up in consternation; it was such an ominous sound that had preceded the ever-memorable Massacres of the Prisons. A municipal guard, fearing a riot in the Conciergerie in which he might perish, cried out—

“It is nothing, do not alarm yourselves. It is only the Widow Capet leaving the Conciergerie for the Place de la Révolution.”

A profound silence fell on the prison. Madame de Noailles and the aristocrat ladies crossed themselves and bowed their heads; the Duc d'Amboise and other gentlemen dropped on one knee as in the presence of Majesty. And while the saintly Abbé Emery in a solemnly impressive voice recited the Prayers for the Dying, Eglée fell on her knees, sobbing.

CHAPTER VIII

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HEARTS AND ARISTOCRATS

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SHORTLY after the execution of the queen the famous Twenty-two, the Girondin leaders in the Convention, arrived in a batch at the Conciergerie. Of such high political importance was their trial that the daily death-rate of the prisons considerably slackened, for during the protracted examination of these men the Committee of Public Safety, at their wits' ends to condemn them, had little time to think of less notorious game snared in the Twelve Houses of Arrest.

"Eglée," said the Duc d'Amboise to her, "I foresee it will be long before we know our fate. Fouquier is going to have his hands full with the Girondins, and it will be hard work for him to prove them royalists or conspirators against the Republic. The chances are we shall be forgotten for a time."

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"Oh, M. le Duc," she replied, "is it not possible for you to escape out of this? Now will be the time, when all thoughts are taken up with the Girondins."

"My dear girl," he said, with his affectation of cynicism, "have I not told you I have ceased to take any interest in my life? I would rather be here than in Coblenz. Life there is a hell, nothing but perpetual disappointment. I was there and I know; I tell you I am sick of it. And even if I should get away to England, can you fancy me in the Faubourg St. Antoine of London, turned cook for a living?"

"Is that what the aristocrats are doing nowadays?" she asked.

"What else do you expect them to do, Eglée, when all the rabble of France have been given their property by the Convention? If I escaped from the Conciergerie I should be penniless."

"And would that bring you down to my level?"

The words were uttered absent-mindedly, but collecting her thoughts, she added—

"That was a foolish question of mine, M. le Duc. Of course, rich or poor, you would always be an aristocrat, and I shall always belong to the people."

"I am not so sure of that," he said, with a laugh, "after what you did for the queen you are as much an aristocrat as any of us here. You don't belong to the

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people any more for all that you take such pains to tell me so half-a-dozen times a day. You are what Fouquier calls an 'incorrigible aristocrat.' As for me," he added proudly, "I hate the people, I make no secret of it. They can make me a beggar or cut off my head, but they can't take from me the fact of my descent from the days of St. Louis."

His words or his manner, or both, annoyed her. She replied quickly, with scorn—

"If I were M. le Duc d'Amboise and had his brains I should escape from this prison. And I should not go to the Faubourg St. Antoine of London and turn cook; I should be an aristocrat through and through. With such a great name anybody would give me a sword; I should join the royalist army and fight for my rights." And with a toss of her head Eglée left him.

Their conversations invariably ended in this way. It was a somewhat turbulent friendship, and, perhaps from the very oddity of it, the more interesting to the Duc d'Amboise. He never took offence at Eglée's scornful reproofs; with her they were mere flashes and her peace was quickly made. The better she got to know him the nearer her own level he seemed to come; at times it seemed to Eglée as if the vast difference in rank had disappeared. He treated her with that

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inimitable court-grace which the aristocrats of the old *régime* alone possessed, making no distinction between her and Madame de Noailles. She fully realised his fallen estate ; to her extravagantly romantic way of thinking it was an outrage, and she pitied him exceedingly. But at other times there was something contemptible in his weakness and cheaply affected cynicism. Her intercourse with this man was ruffled by these two emotions, pity and scorn. They filled her thoughts constantly, each contending for supremacy, now one, now the other on top. To Eglée the Conciergerie was by no means the abode of *ennui*.

The Duc d'Amboise was not indifferent to her pity and contempt, they were part of a personality that was influencing him more than he imagined. He had never met any women out of his own rank before ; Eglée was a novel experience. In the days of his vanity he would never have noticed her, but in the Conciergerie, in common with the rest of the aristocrats, he never thought of her degradation. There was something real about her, something rugged and strong, like granite. He would have laughed if he chanced to picture her in a salon of great ladies, dressed *à la mode* ; yet in spite of her lack of education, in spite of her lack of breeding, there was something about the girl that all the fine women he had known did not possess.

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It was the power to harden the viscid weakness of his nature, to galvanise it into a sort of earnestness. In the Conciergerie, under the spell of that most potent arch-magician, Misfortune, all were equal ; characters were stripped of all wrappings and stood in their native nakedness—weak and strong, vain and nobly aspiring, criminal and pure.

. The idea of love never entered the consideration of these two. The Duc d'Amboise was aware of the splendid physical beauty of Eglée, but the Conciergerie was no place for a *liaison*, and he was no longer in light mood. Coblentz had sobered him. Nor to Eglée had the thought of love ever suggested itself. Their acquaintance was merely amusing to one and turbulent to the other.

In the meantime the trial of the Twenty-two was rending France and Paris into factions ; and Fouquier, driven to his wits' ends to find testimony that should incriminate these men, bethought himself of Madame de Noailles, whose brother-in-law, now safe beyond the frontier, was known to be a Girondin—the Vicomte de Noailles, the aristocrat-patriot, chief figure in the tableau of Feudalism abolishing itself, sublime tableau done in the pagan style, one of the strangest of many strange things produced by the Revolution. She was summoned before the Revolu-

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tionary Tribunal, and appeared there with a proud and cold demeanour. This lady, as fragile as *biscuit de Sévres*, and who all her life, like a priceless piece of bric-à-brac, had been preserved, as it were, in a cloud-case at the top of the world, did not break in the rough hands of Fate. Fouquier's questions were brutal, and offended female dignity flung them back scornfully. In a rage that he could not snare her in his pitfalls, he insulted her grossly. To whom she made the haughty answer—

“Send me to the guillotine, as that is your intent. I will have you remember that the de Noailles have the prerogative of personal attendance on the Sovereigns of France—a prerogative I do not shrink from claiming on the steps of the scaffold. The guillotine is a royal Calvary to which I shall deem it an honour to pay a pilgrimage!”

And Fouquier had blinked his rat-eyes, accounting himself very clever to have snared her into such treason.

“Assassins!” yelled Eglée, her eyes blurred with thick tears, when the municipal guards led Madame de Noailles away. In her robust physical strength and fearless contempt of the Revolution, she felt equal to protect the aristocrat lady against great odds, as she had done Couchette. She was in the mood to have

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sprung on a municipal guard unawares, and strangled him. But Madame de Noailles curbed the girl's unbridled spirit.

"Eglée," she said haughtily, "your rage is out of place. It is only the people who shriek and wring their hands in the tumbrils. Surely you know that we aristocrats go to the guillotine with dignity."

. A deep blush of mortification spread over Eglée's cheeks, she felt as if she had dishonoured Madame de Noailles. Abashed and confused she shrunk away, while the guards escorted their brave victim to the tumbriel. The shriek and the Ça-ira that greeted her arrival outside in the street penetrated even into the court of the Conciergerie. And to those that heard that terrible greeting it was like the cry of Moloch.

The departure of Madame de Noailles stripped the Conciergerie for a time of the last lady of exalted rank. Nearly all the aristocrats, both male and female, had been executed; it seemed as if the aristocracy was being exterminated.

The Conciergerie continued to be crowded, but now its inmates were a medley of all ranks. From the uttermost ends of France, along all highways, there tramped on foot towards Paris and the Twelve Houses of Arrest a veritable army of Suspects, travel-stained, shackled, and doomed beforehand.

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One day there arrived at the Conciergerie twenty peasant women from Poitou, sent by their municipality to be tried by the Revolutionary Tribunal. Letterless tillers of the soil, they neither understood nor appreciated the fiat of the Revolution that from an aristocrat's serfs had turned them into an aristocrat's equals, and more than equal. They belonged to a district which had protested against the terror of the Revolution, and in the hour of triumph a not-to-be-contradicted Republic had seized them to prove its sovereignty. On arrival at the Conciergerie these women, covered with mud and dirt and worn out with the fatigue of a long and rapid journey, fell down on the pavement of the court and slept. During the few days they were in the prison they answered not to their names, which nobody knew, but to their numbers, which they repeated to themselves as if learning them by rote, in a senseless, parrot-like fashion. The expression of their faces evinced no appreciation of the fate that menaced them; in the rude strength of their bodies and the stolidity of their aspect they were like cattle one sees in market-places, that regard what is going on around them fixedly and without recognition. They suffered, but it was the suffering of bees that are being brutally goaded to the slaughter-house.

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Out of pity the Duc d'Amboise spoke to one of these women a mere crumb of comfort, which was wasted on her, for she was too dazed to understand. Fatigue, dull fear, and the rapidity with which events moved around her, naturally slow-witted and accustomed to a familiar routine, seemed to confound her intelligence. Eglée had, however, noticed him address the girl. The thing, insignificant in itself, appeared in her eyes of great magnitude. She resented it. The Duc d'Amboise might talk and make love for all that to any aristocrat lady, that was natural, but when he descended to address peasants who were beneath even her level Eglée's wrath was unbounded. In that moment she hated and despised him ; and as for the peasant girl, Eglée longed to strangle her ; she was sure the girl had been struck with his beauty and had made some sly advance to him. And Eglée was almost inclined to excuse the Duc d'Amboise in her towering hatred of the peasant. So swift, so new, so powerful was this emotion, it frightened her ; she had never known anything like it before. The perplexity of it made her seek to explain it to herself, but the explanation was both unsatisfactory and alarming—it made her ashamed of herself. She was afraid to look the aristocrat in the face lest he should read something there that she could find no name for, and she felt as

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guilty as if she had committed an offence against him. What control had she over his actions? Was he not free to bestow his soft glances and sweet speech on whomsoever he pleased?

The young peasant and her cattle-like companions were herded out to the guillotine, and the Duc d'Amboise had no further conversation with them, yet Eglée was not at ease. In some singular way, this man seemed to belong to her, and it troubled her when she remembered he was an aristocrat of lofty rank. These emotions, so foreign to her nature, and which now by their violence and perplexity were poisoning her peace of mind, were explained to her when she least expected and in a highly sensational way.

Fouquier had infamously forestalled justice, and the Twenty-two came back for the last time from their daily visit to the Revolutionary Tribunal, doomed to the guillotine on the morrow. The scene at the bar of the Republic, when Fouquier pronounced the death sentence, had been like one of the tableaux of antiquity. Valazé stabbed himself and fell dead there in excess of indignation, the impetuous man! Vergniaud had a poison-ring to suck, but it contained but one dose. It seemed cowardly to desert his companions, so he sublimely threw it away, and uplifted the Mar-

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seillaïse instead, chanting which the condemned returned to the Conciergerie with the stark body of indignant Valazé in their midst. It was a day the like of which there had not been in the Conciergerie before—a day of evil-boding, illuminated as by divine torches with a transcendental courageous despair. The death pose of the Girondins acted on the prison like the spell of an enchantment, transfiguring the crime and treason it contained into a sort of martyrdom. To all the summons of the guillotine was a call to sacrifice themselves, it was like the dreadful Roman shout, "*Christiani ad leones!*" Eglée longed to be up and doing some grand heroic thing. For the first time her imprisonment was a shackle which prevented her from becoming immaterial—that favourite pose of the French, the pose conscious of a world looking on.

That same day a young man in the service of the Republic and his week-old bride had been arrested for the murder of a rich relative, and Fouquier had tried them and doomed them then and there. On the morrow they were to follow the Twenty-two to the scaffold. Neither of them felt remorse for the crime they had committed, but to be separated from one another was a torture such as hell itself had not in store for them. They pleaded frantically with the

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municipal guards not to separate them, but to chain them rather side by side to the walls. There was no disguising the sincerity of their appeal ; to witness it was as painful as to have experienced it, and together with the pending immolation of the Girondins made the tense feeling of suspense acute throughout that memorable day. Such pleading no human heart could withstand, least of all a sentimental Celtic one, especially as the point at issue was crime and not the far graver one of treason against the Republic. So the municipal guards had yielded, and the young murderer husband and his young murderess wife spent their last night near Eglée, locked in each other's arms. And ever and anon there floated in the darkness Vergniaud's matchless voice leading in the grand swan-song of the Girondins.

It was the first time Eglée had witnessed the love of others. To her love had been a mere glib term, as she had never felt it she never thought of it. The fierce, mad mingling of these two hearts, the undeniable obliteration of everything but themselves, the tragic happiness in their unity which was indivisible, had a painful effect on her. She lay broad awake in the dark in the clutch of a nameless, nervous fear. Over the night as well as the day the dying Girondins had cast solemnity, more full of omen in the dark than in

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the light ; the night seemed like the funeral trappings of the lovers, whose sighs and ecstatic embraces Fate was ruthlessly shearing away hour by hour. The turmoil of her sensations was so powerful and strange Eglée felt she must cry out, that she must speak to some one who understood. To her who had never known a pain or an ache, such sensations were maddening. Gradually it was borne upon her that the lovers had lost consciousness of their suffering in their absolute forgetfulness of all but themselves. Something told her as if it were shouted in her ears that such love alone was the remedy to cure her indescribable alarm. She saw into her own soul ; it was as bare to her as if a searchlight had been flashed into it which pierced the deepest darkness leaving not a crevice in shadow. Then as she lay on her mattress, wide-eyed and dripping in a cold sweat, the figure of the Duc d'Amboise came before her ; she seemed to see every lineament of his handsome, dissipated face, every familiar gesture of his graceful figure, to hear his soft, well-bred voice, to feel his eyes on her. So vivid was her fancy she could not by any effort of will banish the picture, but it grew more and more real ; his presence enveloped her, she heard his breathing, she felt his arms around her, his lips pressed to hers in a kiss like that of the lovers'.

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With a stifled cry she sat up on her mattress, trembling with shame. Dark as it was, she felt as if the whole prison could read her secret : perhaps they already knew it, perhaps *he* laughed at her. She put out her hand to touch Couchette who lay asleep beside her ; she must awake her ; it was imperative to talk to some one, and Couchette was her creature. But she hesitated ; her reason, which seemed to have wandered, came back to her. No one could sympathise with her ; she must bear the whole burden of her love alone. Love ? Why, that of those two silly lovers sighing there in the dark was as nothing to what she felt. Alas ! she was a fille de joie soiled with the mud of the Faubourg, and a dry sob choked her. There was only one thing for her to do : she must renounce such a love. She knew it could be done, for she had a will of iron ; she could not crush it out—ah no ! that she could not do—it was beyond her strength ; but she could hide it so deep that she herself could scarcely find it again.

And so throughout that night, while the Twenty-two cast on the prison the spell of their pythian chant, the Marseillaise, and the lovers clasped each other in ecstatic despair, Eglée wrestled with herself. Her nature was shaken to its depth and in the convulsion, passion, like a dormant lion, was aroused.

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Her fight was fierce, but no argument could help her ; argument never does, it is merely the last fatal weapon in the adversary's hand. With the dawning of the day her sleepless eyes fell on the accustomed scene ; but the visual sense embraced but one picture—the figure of the Duc d'Amboise was everywhere. Thus Eglée learned she loved.

• The Twenty-two left the Conciergerie impressively enough, stark Valazé jolting on his rude bier in the tumbril along with the living—dauntless challenge of a defiant Republic to all who oppose her ! The lovers, too, went out on that journey from which there is no return, and once more the prison resumed its wonted air. But to Eglée it was no longer the same—to her the novel brightness of its life had vanished. The miserable cellar in the Rue Fromenteau was preferable now. She felt guilty and full of shame that made her wish to hide herself ; she dreaded lest her secret should be discovered. The thought of loving the Duc d'Amboise openly and freely, and being loved in return by him, made her dizzy. But that was one of the golden apples of life Fate had put beyond her reach—such as she had no right to taste it. The curious working of her mind that had from the first made her conscious and ashamed of her degradation now even

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questioned the right of such as she to love one so removed from her in rank. In her tumultuous and boundless passion for the Duc d'Amboise she felt as if she had committed a sacrilege. To be his mistress even was not possible; if she thought of such a thing she put it out of her mind at once. It was not thus she loved; the love she bore this man, so far above her, was quite different. Hidden somewhere in the ashes of her sullied life there burnt a spark of mankind's immortal, innate sense of Right and Wrong—a spark fanned into a blaze and fed by the circumstances of the Revolution. The spark had become a fire now, by the light of which her uncouth soul expressed its sense of Right and Wrong as self-sacrifice.

In spite of all inward alarm, Eglée's woman's-wit availed her well when on the morrow of her great discovery she and the Duc d'Amboise met as usual and she knew he did not guess. Having learned subterfuge from its necessity, Eglée learnt how to disguise her feelings, and to hide the guilty face of her love under a mask of affectation. Her manner changed to the Duc d'Amboise; she was not possessed of the skill to continue the old intercourse as if nothing had happened. His cynicism, his apathy in regard to his fate, his irritating weakness no longer

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called forth her contemptuous reproof; her love was so fresh and strong it forgave all his faults, made him the dearer. She listened to what he said absent-mindedly, with a dull and stupid air. Their friendship lost its *verve*.

The Duc d'Amboise noticed it, and said to her reproachfully a few days after the change in her manner—

“Eglée, you are like all your sex. The mind of a woman is full of change; it is restless. The novelty of the Conciergerie, which was oddly so fascinating to you, has worn off. You are longing for excitement. I used to like to tease you with my grumbling to see you flare up, but now you never pay attention to what I say. I can't blame you, for I must be a devilish bore and I have lost the art of pleasing women. Eglée, you are eaten up by *ennui*.”

She looked at him curiously and replied—

“Yes, M. le Duc; you are right. It's *ennui* that I feel; I want to do something to drive it away. What did the great ladies use to do?”

“They were for ever seeking new pleasures; but it was hard work.”

“The prison life makes me dull; I am accustomed to activity—see how strong I am. I want exercise; I want freedom; I want to distract myself.”

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"I am sorry I can't help you, Eglée," he said, "I am thinking that what you want is like asking for the moon. I wonder if they will send me to the guillotine to-day."

A sudden chill fell on her ; she shivered as if in ague.

"What is the matter ? " he asked in alarm.

"I—I don't feel very well," she replied, "it's—it's the prison life," and Eglée smiled faintly.

The fate of the guillotine, so long postponed, had made her cease to think of it. After the trial of the Girondins Fouquier's batches had increased as if to make up for lost time. There was a veritable holocaust taking place in the Conciergerie, but so far, as if by miracle, neither the name of the Duc d'Amboise nor that of the Comte de Beugnot had been pricked. And Eglée had taken it into her head that they were going to get off, forgotten perhaps, like herself and Couchette.

The idea that she had been deluding herself, and that he might at any moment be summoned away, was terrifying. She who had never known what it was to be afraid of the Revolution was afraid now.

"Oh, M. le Duc !" she cried, clasping her hands, "you must not die, you must not die ! "

He looked at her in surprise. This terror was very real.

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"Ha, Eglée," he said, "our nerves are out of sorts this morning. My girl, you need exercise and air; you can't get the latter, unfortunately, but exercise you can. What do you say, shall we pace up and down the crowded court for half an hour every day? It would do us both good."

Eglée recovered her composure with difficulty, she felt she had almost betrayed herself. His comfort was very hard to bear, but women, even the most untutored, have an instinct that like the shell of a tortoise shields them in difficult situations of the heart. Ignoring his surprise, Eglée said proudly—

"You are young, M. le Duc, and life is sweet; you don't really want to die, it is not natural. Look at me; I am as strong as a giantess and I am not afraid of Fouquier and all the rabble of Paris, but I wish to live. I can die without fear, ah yes, but still I don't wish to die, for all that my life has been a hard one. I am sure it is so, with you too. Oh, M. le Duc! your life is valuable, you have brains, you are a great aristocrat. The little king in the Temple needs friends sadly enough, so you say; for you tell me the Emigrés are no help to him—this may be so, I do not know. But surely, M. le Duc, once free you could help him; you are noble, you are loyal, you have brains. Oh, do find a way to escape, to be free—I am sure there is a way.

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Do not be caught like a rat in a trap ; make haste while there is yet time, I pray you ; if not for your own sake, then for His Majesty's, escape ! ”

Her voice was low-pitched, and she threw unconsciously the whole force of her personality into her words. Across the Duc d'Amboise's handsome face, perhaps the handsomer for the pallor of dissipation which seemed to heighten the natural hauteur of his manner, there passed the shadow of a deep earnestness. For a brief moment he felt sincere in spite of himself, and he thrilled with a feeling that all the grandeur of Versailles had never effected. Had he known it, it was seed sown in soil tilled to receive it, for Misfortune had made him serious, as it does all entangled in its net. The frivolity of his heyday was gone, beyond recall ; the Revolution that had knocked his pedestal from under him bringing him down with a crash, the sudden menace of death, as it were, at the banquet of youth, were the only facts that could astonish his butterfly soul and shrivel up his gaudy tinsel wings.

“ Eglée,” he said earnestly, “ if I were free and had some one like you near me to keep me to the mark, I believe I should be capable of great things. That's it ; I want some one to keep me to the scratch. I have visions of myself somewhere under the stars—king's minister and all that—but they fade away as quickly as

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they come ; they are mere flashes of what might be but never will be ; for I am weak, Eglée, cursedly weak. Fool, fool that I was ! Instead of mistresses I should have sought an Egeria ! ”

For the moment he was transfigured, he was the ideal Duc d'Amboise that the fille de joie had so fantastically pictured to herself.

“ Ah, M. le Duc,” said Eglée very earnestly, “ try to escape—oh, try ! ”

But the scales fell on his eyes again immediately. The spark had failed to ignite him, and as if ashamed of himself he lightly changed the subject.

The weeks passed, chasing one another with electrical velocity throughout broad France, but lagging slow-footed in the prisons. And as if by miracle the name of the Duc d'Amboise continued to escape the notice of Fouquier. Eglée had her love well in hand now ; it had been a fierce struggle in her wild nature to hide it from the Duc d'Amboise, to make it obey her. That she should have struggled at all was an anomaly, but her code of ethics was a crude one. It would be hard to discover how she had acquired it, for the Rue Fromenteau was not a school in which filles de joie learnt passionate loyalty and self-sacrificing love. The old friendly relation of these two prisoners so antipodal in rank existed the same to

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all outward appearance, a sort of passing wayfarers' mutual greeting.* But its platonism was one-sided now ; to the man it was still merely a habit that lightened the tedium of the prison.

And as they paced the court of the Conciergerie, as they sat side by side on a bench against the walls, the ground-note of all their talk was escape, escape. It was Eglée's sole, never-ending theme ; and on her mattress at night she puzzled those poor brains of hers over it—all to no purpose. The Duc d'Amboise' was strong in his weakness ; life was alluring, its rewards were worth trying for, but he was out of the running. To make a dash for liberty and the plums of the world that he knew to be there he never tried. As he had wasted his chances in the glittering past, so he wasted them now, wilfully making hope more illusive and escape more difficult. There were many noblemen in France like him—men full of promise and indolence, which are the parents of weakness. If there had been fewer the fall of the Monarchy in 1789 would not have ended in the crash of 1792.

No salon of the old Court was ever so full of gossip and scandal as the Conciergerie. The relation of one prisoner to another and the cynical speculation as to who would be the next to go to the guillotine were the chief topics of conversation and discussed with

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equal venom and glibness. The friendship between the aristocrat and the fille de joie could not fail to be commented on, and as always the wrong and wicked interpretation was put upon it.

For some time the Duc d'Amboise and Eglée were quite unaware that their friendly intercourse was the talk of the prison. The aristocrat, perfectly honest in his liking for the girl, had not the least ulterior thought, and therefore did not fancy anybody else had. And Eglée, who had satisfied herself that the Duc d'Amboise did not guess her secret, considered it to be equally well hidden from the rest. They were, however, both enlightened abruptly.

The Comte de Beugnot had guessed Eglée's secret long before she herself was aware of it. To this astute and cynical man she was a study in human nature, and he microscopically observed her entire character.

"Eglée," he said, "did it never strike you that if Chaumette had carried out his intention to send you to the scaffold with the queen, your loyalty and zeal in her behalf would have been better unexpressed?"

"Ah, but how could I foresee that my admiration for her would heighten her misery? Yet, M. le Comte," she said sadly, "I know all the villainy of the people and I should have foreseen Chaumette's

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attempt. But I loved the queen so much I had to prove my love for her in some way. You see, I have not the cleverness of the great ladies. At any rate," she added, as if his words troubled her, "Chaumette did not succeed after all."

"None more pleased than I," he replied. "But in spite of all that, my poor Eglée, if you had gone to the scaffold with the queen there would not have been any difference between the two of you, you would have appeared her equal."

"Yes, but I should have properly fooled the cursed knaves."

"And how?"

"How? In the very middle of the route I should have thrown myself at her feet and neither the axe nor the devil should have made me rise!"

The Comte de Beugnot regarded her curiously.

"Where did you get this hero-worship?" he asked. "Eglée, I admire it sincerely; if we had more of your kind in France these times would have been impossible. You were born five hundred years too late; such sincerity as yours belongs to the days of Joan of Arc, it is an anachronism in the Year One of Liberty."

Sincerity, M. le Comte, that you regret so glibly as an anachronism, in faith, not in the days of chivalry

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was there so much of it as now. Since the early Christians worshipped the Unseen God in the catacombs there has been no degree of sincerity equal to this of the People in Revolution. But the wise Comte de Beugnot and the foolish Duc d'Amboise would both fain resent the truth of such a statement. They refused to take seriously a Fact clad in a sheet of flame from Tophet, in their opinion there was an etiquette of Facts to be observed. Gentlemen, the sincerity of Eglée which you both admire so much because you did not expect it of her, is merely the sincerity of the great Fact of the Revolution of the People freakishly perverted.

The conversation of the Comte de Beugnot was always listened to by Eglée with great respect. His suave, cultured manner impressed her, and as she was too ignorant to understand the half of what he said, his knowledge seemed to her vast. She had no answer to make to him now when he talked to her of hero-worship and the anachronism of sincerity. He went on dispassionately, like one making an experiment in science—

“And in your loyalty to the monarchical principle which makes you appear to take a sort of pride in your inferiority, I wonder if anything could contravert it—say love?”

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"I do not understand you, M. le Comte," said Eglée, with an inward sensation as if she did half understand him.

"I mean, you who declare yourself unworthy to raise your eyes to the queen, even when she ceases to be queen and goes like any criminal to the guillotine, you who look on us in a most extraordinary way, as if we were demi-gods—which I assure you we are not—I wonder what you would do if by some curious chance you should conceive a real passion for an aristocrat?"

Her heart was in her throat, she stared at him in suspense. The Comte de Beugnot had not the least wish to hurt Eglée's feelings—in fact he would have gone out of his way to do her a kindness; but he did not intend to lose this fine chance of dissecting a character whose novelty amused him. Without appearing to notice her discomposure he continued kindly—

"There are instances, in the pagan mythology, Eglée, of human beings who in worshipping the gods as gods fell in love with them as human beings. The step from veneration to love is very easy, and it is very natural. Now, for instance, if you fell in love with an aristocrat, I wonder what would become of your idea of your own past. I should say you would

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forget all about it. When the pagans loved the gods I don't think they thought much of the difference between them."

Two great unshed tears glistened in Eglée's eyes. So this clever man had discovered her secret ; perhaps the whole prison knew it, some enemy would blurt it out to the Duc d'Amboise and their friendship would cease. She had none of the arts of the educated world ; she knew not the slightest how to dissemble her feelings, to cleverly parry his insinuations.

"Oh ! M. le Comte," she cried in an agony there was no disguising, "I love him, why or how I cannot tell. It came to me like my love for the queen. But oh, monsieur, I implore—I implore you to be merciful to me ! Do not not betray me ; do not let the Duc d'Amboise know !"

"Hush, Eglée ! hush, my girl," he said softly, "the whole Conciergerie will see you and hear you and guess—hush !"

"I do not know what you mean about gods and pagans, M. le Comte, I am not learned like you. But I know I am a fille de joie—there were none in the Faubourg poorer or worse than I and Couchette. The Duc d'Amboise is very great ; his name was given him by St. Louis ; he is very far, far above me. But, my God ! I love him—I cannot, cannot help it, M. le Comte. I

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have tried, but I can't ; and if he knew he would laugh at me, he would despise me ! Oh, have mercy on me, M. le Comte, for you are kind and good and great ! ”

“You need fear nothing from me, Eglée,” he said kindly, and added as if to encourage her, though his words, unknown to him, were to her like the siege of a temptation there was next to no chance of resisting, “but you make a mistake to think you are so degraded and that he is so high above you that your love is an insult to him. The Comtesse du Barry was once only Jeanne Vaubernier, quite as insignificant as you ; and are you sure that d’Amboise himself doesn’t love you ? If he does, I know nothing of love, or your confounded past you insist so much on will be to him shrivelled up like a moth in a candle flame. Believe me, Eglée, love makes no distinction of rank.”

She shook her head sadly and repeated—

“You will not betray me, I implore you ! ”

“I am your friend, my girl,” he said as he left her.

Eglée went at once to the women’s *grille*, and throwing herself on her mattress tried to compose herself. But peace could not come to such a wild, passionate nature easily ; she could think of nothing but that her secret was betrayed and the thoughts

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suggested by the Comte de Beugnot's words. Oh ! if she could but kiss the feet of the man she loved ! If she could but put her lips to his and feel his arms about her ! And red with shame she buried her face in the mattress, and clenched her fists like one in pain, but no moan came from her lips.

The Comte de Beugnot was satisfied with his experiment ; it had turned out exactly as he expected. The Conciergerie was not so lively but that a little romance would enliven it, and he felt genuinely sorry for Eglée. Between himself and the young Duc d'Amboise there was nothing in common. The Comte de Beugnot, in the days of the old *régime*, had regarded him as an empty-headed, dissolute boy. And for the Comte de Beugnot the Duc d'Amboise, if he ever thought of him at all, had a priggish dislike. It was not the society of such men as de Beugnot that the Duc d'Amboise and his intimates had coveted either at Versailles or at Coblenz. The close contact of a mutual imprisonment in the Conciergerie had by no means ripened into friendship. The elder man, from his cool height of polished sarcasm and cynical culture, looked on the younger with contempt, which a common misfortune concealed. The younger regarded the elder with a sort of envious admiration for his attainments, which shone the

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brighter in comparison with his own lack of mental accomplishments. ‘ The calm attitude of the Comte de Beugnot, the even balance of his mind against which misfortune broke ineffectually, was a constant poignant reproach to the Duc d’Amboise, who knew very well that his own attempt at fatalistic cynicism was a failure. Under other circumstances the Comte de Beugnot would never have thought of studying the character of this aristocrat-rake awakened too late to seriousness. And now in applying his microscopic lens to the Duc d’Amboise he did so with condescension. He knew that the aristocrat liked Eglée—that was easy enough to see—and for her sake he would endeavour, if possible, to excite a livelier emotion. He did not consider the nature of the interest he hoped to create in the Duc d’Amboise, he did not in the least care whether it were base or noble. Perhaps he thought that in any case in such a man it would be base, but that was not the question. His sole idea was in some slight way to benefit Eglée, in whom he was interested. He had too much tact to attempt to enlighten the Duc d’Amboise as to Eglée’s passion save by subtle suggestion, and he prided himself that he knew human nature too well to doubt the result. At the least d’Amboise’s vanity would be flattered, at the most Eglée would enjoy a little happiness while her

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imprisonment lasted or till the guillotine ended it.

Daily contact had given to both men a certain freedom of address, and on the first occasion that offered itself the Comte de Beugnot, cunningly leading the conversation on to the Emigrés, said lightly—

“You didn’t leave a wife or a heart that’s breaking for you on the other side of the Rhine, did you, d’Amboise? My poor wife lying hid in Paris at this moment is so concerned about me that I am in constant dread lest she will be incautious and be arrested by the Republic. I have managed to get messages to her, but instead of calming her they seem to heighten her anxiety. The women we love who love us are apt to put a spoke in the wheel of our philosophy.”

“Ah, I was somewhat wiser than you after all, de Beugnot,” laughed the Duc d’Amboise ironically. “My troubles are purely personal. My lady friends at Coblenz are all dry-eyed, and there hasn’t been a quaver of a heart for me since I entered this. No; neither wife nor mistress have I to lament me, yet I can boast of more victories than the Great Condé.”

“Yes,” said the Comte de Beugnot, “battles, I grant you. But as for victory, my friend, you leave

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it in doubt when you say Coblentz is dry-eyed ; one generally has a trophy to show.”

“ A free-lance eats and drinks his plunder ; he never burdens himself with spoils. But pray, de Beugnot, what are you trying to find out ? for though I am not as quick-witted as you are, I know there is something behind your words.”

Without being in the least disconcerted the Comte de Beugnot said—

“ Do you know, d’Amboise, I am glad I have a wife and children torn with anxiety for me. There is a selfish comfort in being loved.”

“ Pshaw ! ” replied the Duc d’Amboise, “ I have found little substance in that article. I daresay many women would have been glad to call themselves Madame la Duchesse d’Amboise, and in the course of things I should undoubtedly have done some one that honour. But from what I have seen of matrimony I should not have expected my wife to follow me doggedly like a peasant’s woman wherever ill-luck drove me.”

“ That is because you would have chosen a lady of your own rank, and they are not invariably faithful in misfortune. If you had been rash enough to make a *mésalliance* like the young Marquis de Beaufremont, who married his steward’s sister, perhaps like him

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through a connection with the people you might escape the guillotine."

"I should have pleased myself, M. de Beugnot," the Duc d'Amboise answered coldly.

"I mean no offence, d'Amboise. I assure you, from what I know of a wife's devotion, I would seek fidelity in any rank; it is worth any sacrifice to possess it."

"M. de Beugnot, I do not follow you. Will you enlighten me as to your motive for this apparent cross-examination?"

"Perhaps, unknown to yourself, you did leave wet eyes at Coblenz. Would you not be pleasantly surprised to find one of your spoils in Paris, perhaps in the Conciergerie?"

The Duc d'Amboise curled his lip scornfully.

"Your question is too personal, M. le Comte. I told you I had no trophies."

"Well, the prison thinks differently. There is as much scandal here as in any salon. See here, d'Amboise, we are almost the sole aristocrats left in the Conciergerie. It is absurd for us to quarrel; in spite of ourselves a common misfortune draws us together. We owe it to our caste to uphold one another, I am sure you will agree with me."

"I am quite aware of the obligations of my rank,"

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said the Duc d'Amboise proudly. "The Revolution has stripped me as well as yourself of everything, but I hope it will take more than the guillotine to deprive us of chivalry. Now will you oblige me by telling me what is behind all this petty gossip of the prison?"

"This bourgeois canaille," said the Comte de Beugnot, looking fixedly at the young aristocrat, "pretends to be scandalised that a man of your lofty rank should try to lighten the tedium of prison life by practising the gentle art on a fille de joie when there are other ladies here more worthy of your regard."

"You surprise me, de Beugnot; surely I am innocent of the charge!" There was no doubting the sincerity of his astonishment.

"I readily believe you," said the Comte de Beugnot, "and as man to man, as one aristocrat in misfortune to another, as one who knows the treasure it is to possess a woman's heart no matter how it is wrapped up to one who is sceptical of its value, let me take the liberty to advise you to keep the trophy of the next victory you win in love, it will be worth it." And the Comte de Beugnot moved away with a comfortable feeling that he had gracefully accomplished what he desired.

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He was sorry that this man had been able to inspire love in Eglée, he felt that such devotion as she was capable of was worthy of a nobler object. But he was philosopher enough to know that the heart is guided entirely by caprice, and that his help rather than his advice was more to the point. As for the Duc d'Amboise, the Comte de Beugnot considered his character too obvious to be worth studying, but in this the man of the world made the mistake common to his kind. He unconsciously allowed prejudice to bias him; a character that one looks upon with contempt and as patent to any one is not unfrequently the character the most difficult to comprehend, the one most worthy of the critical scalpel of the student of human nature.

The Duc d'Amboise was honestly surprised. So the platonic friendship had turned into love? He was conscious of a passing flash of pity for Eglée. How she must have struggled to hide it from him! Then he laughed bitterly to himself. So he who had once been the pet of the Royal *entourage* had won the heart of a fille de joie of the Faubourg St. Antoine? It seemed to make his downfall complete, to prove the conclusiveness of the Revolution. He was an utterly disillusioned man; degradation was his portion, and the guillotine was his prospect, fixed and sure. It galled

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him to be the subject of the lewd amusement of scandal-mongering canaille; he had never had a wrong thought in regard to Eglée in all their acquaintancé; let the prison say what it liked he would snap his fingers at it; what was its opinion to him? And so Eglée loved him? It explained the capriciousness of her conduct, her deep interest in his welfare, her desire that he should escape. De Beugnot's words fired his fancy, in spite of himself his cheeks flushed with pride. A ray of pleasure fell into the morose Conciergerie, a faint flicker of the riot of the sunbeams of the past; it had fallen athwart him and, doomed as he was, before he went to the guillotine he would bask in it. Yes, from a frail marquise to a fille de joie of the people, he would try the whole gamut. And what a splendid specimen of woman was Eglée! The thought excited him; he saw her with new eyes. She was no longer the strange sibylline girl whose sincerity had awakened earnestness in him, whose companionship magnetically rayed forth the sympathy his bitter soul craved. He did not think of a deeper, nobler meaning to love; to him it was now as it had always been, as he had been trained to regard it—passion. His life was a failure, the little span left to him was being ended in degradation; de Beugnot's words filled him with a sudden and swift desire—a

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desire to taste an old pleasure of the past once again before he went to the guillotine. The thought made him reckless. The publicity of a *liaison* in the prison had no shame for him, his self-respect was utterly gone in the Revolution ; and as for hers, why, wasn't she as she herself said a *fille de joie* of the Faubourg, a girl with a past impossible to forget ?

His eyes eagerly scanned the court of the Conciergerie in search of her. She was sitting on a stool with her head leaning against one of the sombre pillars and an absent regard in her fine eyes. Her rough and unveneered character formed with such difficulty gave to her irregular face a force and a peculiar beauty of its own. She was an animate picture of perfect health and strength. His eyes feasted on her. For the first time he noticed the extreme poverty of her dress. The fantastic clothes she wore were old and dirty and ragged ; the tricôteuses had nearly stripped her naked, but she had patched the shreds together with great care, having felt a shame in the midst of the aristocrats ; and here and there in her sleeves where the holes were too big to be mended the white skin of her arms was exposed. She had lost her neckerchief, and the fluted tower of her throat was bare, making the half-hidden pediment whence it rose suggestive of sculptured marble.

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The Duc d'Amboise approached her cautiously. She was already snared, but before he devoured her he would fascinate her. All the long unused arts of the Adonis of Versailles were requisitioned ; he knew every aristocrat trick of the game, he was a past-master in their use and they had never failed him with his high-born mistresses ; even a Princess of the Blood had owned him irresistible. On such an impressionable girl as Eglée, already predisposed in his favour, they would be irresistible, and he wondered that he had never thought of her before in this light.

He stood beside her leaning gracefully on the pillar against which her head rested.

"Do you know what the whole prison is saying about us, Eglée ?" he said without any preamble.

She looked at him with terror in her eyes and did not answer.

"They say that you and I are in love, and even more than that. They say that I have so little dignity of my position as to amuse myself with a girl of the people."

Eglée rose from her stool agitatedly ; her knees were so weak she could scarcely stand, but, remembering what de Beugnot had said about curious eyes and ears everywhere, with a mighty effort she controlled herself.

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"The canaille lied, of course," he went on, and the whispered manner of his words was like a caress, "but their idea was not so bad ; what do you think ? "

To her, who for over a week had struggled with every phase of her passion, analysed it, purged it of impurity in some curious way, made it ideal, sacred, there was something unspeakably torturing in his manner. It froze her heart, for it told her what she knew, yet dreaded to know, that the Duc d'Amboise did not love her.

"M. le Duc," she said, with dignity, "remember you are a great aristocrat ; you will do nothing, I am sure, to give a handle of contempt to this canaille."

He read her like a book now and knew that she was referring to her own lowliness. It was as if she renounced him, and he imagined the heroic effort of the self-sacrifice. Her manner was a reproach, but the temptation was strong on him, and he whispered passionately—

"Eglée, suppose what they say is true—suppose you care for me ! "

She sank down on the stool again unable to stand. Surely it was presumption in her to dream of a pure love ?

He saw his advantage, and bending over her continued in the same whisper—

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“Eglée, you love me !”

She raised her eyes to his and murmured—

“Yes, I love you.”

It was a solemn avowal and in her voice it sounded tragically impressive. It made him feel mean, dishonourable, cruel ; it was like a dog fondly licking its master's hand which it knows is about to kill it.

“Do with me what you want, how can I resist ?” she said, with a sad seriousness. “Ah, M. le Duc, you aristocrats, who are so fair and so cruel, little know how you bruise the people who loved you once. I hoped grander things of you, I wanted you to be true to your class ; with your name and brains, think what aid you could be to the king ! Ah, M. le Duc, I beseech you even now bestir yourself, escape while there is yet time—think how much may depend on you ! Don't waste your time in trifling over a poor girl like me, a mere cheap toy you will tire of playing with and throw aside when you have broken it. I love you, I am your slave to do what you will with ; I would die for you ; it is all I am worth ; but you, monsieur, have riches and honours and joy waiting for you. Oh, remember you are an aristocrat and think of what I am ! I love you, ah yes ! but do not treat me like the rest—like the people have done ; find a mistress worthy of your rank and leave me to love you in my poor way.”

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The sad and reproachful earnestness of her words stung him to the quick, it disarmed him. He had not expected any resistance, least of all such resistance as this. He remembered what de Beugnot had said of love; somehow it flashed on him that he was being given a chance by destiny that would make his life worth living; he saw himself as he was and what he might become in spite of a vanished Versailles and the Revolution. Weak, unsteady of purpose, reckless, he felt it was his last chance. Once again her magnetic influence touched what there was of earnestness in him. He regarded the fille de joie in an entirely new light.

"By Heaven!" he swore, "Eglée, you are right. I *will* make the effort to escape out of this, and when free to be a man. But only on one condition—you must help me. Your power over me makes you mine, you are necessary to me. What do I care for your birth, for your past? No great lady ever had such power over me as you, the power to make me feel serious. I can't do without you, Eglée—you are mine, mine!"

He spoke very softly so that none should overhear him, but the words were rapid and passionate. Perhaps he himself did not understand what he meant. Love it certainly was not, and if it were passion it was

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decidedly purged of grossness. He believed himself to be sincere. •

To Eglée his words and his manner were a revelation. He had said she was necessary to him, and he meant it ; in the state of mind she was in she readily accepted it as a proof that he loved her. She trembled, her strength was dissolved ; a delicious ecstasy pervaded her from head to foot like the trance of holy annunciations. They had met on the same level at last ! .

So much for the experiments in the science of human nature made by that astute Philosophe aristocrat the Comte de Beugnot. The result was a prison-flower sprung from the sterile soil of the Conciergerie, blooming there for a while and then uprooted as a weed and thrown out on the dunghill of the Revolution.

CHAPTER IX



THE PLOT IN THE PRISON

ONCE shaken out of his apathy and given an object the Duc d'Amboise set himself to accomplish it with an energy one would not have imagined such a man to possess. Like all men, he had in him the making of a useful member of society. The accident of birth had hitherto been unpropitious to the development of the quality of seriousness. The idle luxury of Versailles had given full play to all that was frivolous in him, and the bitter atmosphere of Coblenz had sobered him without bracing him. In exile he had awakened to a stunted, distorted growth ; planted in such a soil as he had been the only fruit that he could produce was sour and innutritious. All his dissatisfaction and such energy as came from it had centred in the manufacture of plots. The fine visions inspired by Eglée's personality—visions of being

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king's minister, of a more solid happiness than he had ever known, of escape, all resolved themselves into plots. Ambition was to be gratified by their aid ; he was to become the man he felt he had in him to become by—plots. To him they were the *sine quâ non* of all success ; he knew no other road to the accomplishment of an end ; from the quest of a new mistress to the quest of a seat at the council of the king everything depended on—plots. In common with all aristocrats, with all Frenchmen of the period, he preferred intrigue to frankness. To be frank was to be a fool ; all the great men he had known, even the frivolous men and women of his set, knew the value of intrigue above frankness. It was in the very air he breathed. Events *conspire* with success or failure was the axiom of the old *régime*. What was the Revolution itself but the most successful of plots ? Was not its existence due to the intrigues of Egalité d'Orleans, the Jacobin Prince of the Blood ? In this question of escape, which was the first step in a new career, a plot of some sort was a necessity. For once he did not regret Coblenz, it was *par excellence* the chief school of intrigue in Europe. The experience gained there had given him a nimbleness of wits that would be of the utmost value to him now. He had resolved to escape from the Conciergerie, and he

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embarked on the dangerous undertaking with the coolness of a professional plotter. •

"There is risk," he said to Eglée, "in trusting to the future to be as unmindful of us as the past. Every hour we remain here is full of danger. Because Fouquier has forgotten me so long does not prove that the chance sight of my name on his list will not jog his memory. We must escape as soon as possible. Failure means death!" •

The Duc d'Amboise spoke with the confidence of one who feels sure of the game he plays.

"It is easier for one to escape than two," said Eglée. "Plan for one, then, M. le Duc."

"Never," he replied. "Remember the bargain, without you I make no effort."

Eglée looked at him with eloquent eyes.

The first rudiment of a plot is to avoid suspicion; and the Duc d'Amboise, who, as it were, understood the technique of intrigue, impressed on Eglée how imperative it was that the prison should not guess their intentions. He even insisted on a pretence of coolness between them.

This did not appear unnatural to Eglée; she acquiesced as a matter of course. But as if to help her lover she suggested they should take the Comte de Beugnot into their confidence; she felt that his advice

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would be invaluable, for he had friends in Paris. The Duc d'Amboise rejected the proposition.

"No," he said, "I do not know an instance where a prisoner has escaped by aid from friends; they invariably fail at the last moment. We must make use of our enemies." He would trust to nothing but his own intelligence; the stake was too serious for him to try experiments to win it.

Nothing could be more lax than the vigilance of the prisons of Paris at this period, but the loose discipline of the Republic was remedied by the Argus-eyed suspicion of the prisoners themselves. They were the real jailers; it was even more essential to throw them off the scent than the guards on duty. Fouquier's Plots in the Prisons had made each prisoner preternaturally suspicious of his neighbour; the least attempt at escape that was detected would be instantly frustrated, for it would endanger the lives of all. A Plot in the Prison meant a holocaust of the prison.

The Duc d'Amboise was of a sudden a changed man. He who had formerly taken not even a curious interest in the prison life observed now minutely every detail of the Conciergerie. The municipal guards especially attracted his critical attention; it was to them that he looked for the success of any plan of escape he formed. They often broke the weary

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monotony of their duty, which from its close confinement they all heartily detested, by chatting with the prisoners. In a few rare cases a chance conversation developed an interest that befriended a prisoner at the Revolutionary Tribunal. These jailers were without exception sansculottes to the core—men driven rabid by the Revolution, men whose enraged patriotism had done the dirty work of the Republic, and whose services it flatteringly recognised by the gift of a petty official post. They were not worse than their kind under other conditions ; some were surly and insulting, others were of a milder disposition, susceptible to pity, and even to bribery, but this phase of their characters was rarely tested on account of the poverty of the prisoners.

In one of these men Eglée recognised a youth of the Faubourg whom she had formerly known by sight.

“Do you think that boy is capable of being won over, Eglée?” asked the Duc de Amboise. “I do not profess to read character, but I should say he would be an easy prey to temptation. Properly worked on he might help us.”

“I remember seeing him in the Faubourg, M. le Duc,” she said. “His name is Lange ; he was once a waiter at the Café Tricolor, but he used to idle about

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the streets most of the time and follow the tumbrils. I shouldn't trust him."

"Eglée," said the Duc d'Amboise, regarding the youthful guard furtively, "you must speak to him. Find out if he is a half-hearted Revolutionist, but don't suggest the idea of escape till I tell you."

Eglée did as she was bid, and watching her opportunity approached the guard and entered into conversation with him casually. He recognised her, and appeared surprised to see her there.

"They arrested me as an incorrigible aristocrat, citizen; what an impertinence!" she said, "as if a fille de joie like me could be an aristocrat, curse the dogs! The Revolution never did me any good, I made more money under the old régime, citizen; we all had easier times then, and I for one am not afraid to own it." She was once again the girl of the people as she stood in front of him with her hands on her hips, and looked at him with a bold, free regard. "Come now," she added, with the mirth and license of the slums where conversation is always personal, "when you loafed about the Faubourg you had a better time than propping up these walls week after week; why, you were free then. Come, own it like a man, citizen!"

"Vive la révolution! vive la république!" he said

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sulkily, "I wish the Republic would cut off the heads of every one of you here, then I could get out and see what is going on in Paris. I've never worked so hard in my life. When I went to the Municipality I didn't think they were going to send me here. I wanted to go to the Army of Custine and see a bit of fighting. That's life, but this moping about in a prison is as bad as being a prisoner. Vive la république!"

Eglée's appearance and manner, and the fact that she was one of the people, made him regard her differently from the rest of the prisoners, it threw him off his guard. Eglée asked him innumerable questions of people known to both of them. And they talked in the *argot* of the Faubourg. In a day they were friends.

"The idea of *me* being an aristocrat or a suspect, citizen!" she said constantly as if to impress him with the fact of its absurdity, "Of course Fouquier detains me here to keep my mouth shut, but he wouldn't dare to bring me before him and try me; it would cover him with ridicule. He would have done it already if he had dared. Couchette and I have been here so long now he has forgotten us."

Eglée said this as a matter of course, though she had her own secret misgivings on the subject since

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the execution of the peasant women from Poitou. If she had not the "brains," the possession of which she regarded as so valuable and which to her meant any sort of education superior to her own, she nevertheless had more than her fair share of native wit and cunning.

"Lange is afraid of the Republic," she said in reporting the result of her talk with him to the Duc d'Amboise. "I guessed it at once ; they are all like that."

"Ah, discontented ! Well, Eglée, you must try to win him over. It will be easy, my girl. Under no consideration mention my name to him, yet, and use all your arts, all your charms on him ; make him smitten ; begin at once, and when you think he is yours, feel him with escape. I daresay at first he will make difficulties, refuse point-blank ; but you must keep at him, coax him—you know how ; talk of a mysterious man who is very rich and will do anything for you ; prove to him the advantages of leaving the service of the Republic ; tempt him with an easy, lazy life, with no fear of the guillotine in it ; promise him money. He will take the bait, and when he bites come to me and I will tell you how to proceed. We must go very cautiously, and little by little. I depend entirely on you, Eglée, to corrupt this guard, but follow my instructions implicitly."

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"Oh, M. le Duc," said Eglée, "if you had only arrived in Paris before the death of Marat you would have saved the queen ! I am sure of it."

His cleverness seemed to her of the very first order ; the quickness and energy with which he conceived his plot and put it into action astonished her, whose thoughts, from lack of education, worked slowly. Instead of the whole day spent in each other's company the two appeared suddenly to have fallen out, and the Conciergerie noticed that their meetings were brief and infrequent. But in them Eglée reported her progress with Lange, and received her further instructions.

She could scarcely realise that the Duc d'Amboise was the same man. So intense was his earnestness, so crafty his counsel, that Eglée was infected with his spirit. The plot as conceived by him unravelled itself in her mind, it fascinated her like a problem whose solution gives one no rest. She was impressed with the part she played in it, its importance was to her a guarantee of good faith. For in the excitement of the effort to escape and the thought of what it meant love was in abeyance. There was no time for love, everything was secondary to the plot ; escape was now all in all.

Nor did the Duc d'Amboise refer again to the

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passion so suddenly aroused in him. The execution of his plot was his sole thought. While it was in embryo he regarded it as the only plot that could possibly avail; its success was of paramount importance. He needed all the cunning he possessed; he grasped every detail; directed every point; and remained perfectly cool—that lynx-eyed coolness, which is suppressed excitement, of the expert gambler, who notes every turn of the cards.

Citizen Lange, the municipal guard, was a mere boy. Of a naturally lazy disposition, he regretted the step he had taken in seeking employment of the State; a sansculotte by birth and breeding he was unaccustomed to any kind of discipline, he fretted under it and longed to escape from its restraint. His former freedom of speech and action that knew no license was now curbed by the livery of the Republic he wore. Of a sudden he found himself in an atmosphere of suspicion; perfectly honest in his devotion to the Revolution, which, like most of the lowest people, he did not at all understand, he lived in terror of it; in his utter insignificance there had been no danger in responding to the tocsin and following the tumbrils, but in the more practical function of guarding the enemies of the Revolution he had become responsible. The Revolution now wore a very different and serious

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aspect ; he knew the meaning of its terror and suspicion, its service was an armoury in which each man was provided with a two-edged sword, on the skilful manipulation of which life depended. There was no relinquishing his employment lest in the expressed desire there might be suspicion ; to one so inexperienced, so indolent, the strain of being always alert lest he should fall into the dangers that were all around him was intolerable. Unlike Jean Laforge he did not sigh for luxury, but for an immunity from terror and a release from the unspeakably dull and compulsory routine of his duties. He was already corrupted when Eglée laid siege to him, but to ensnare him was not so easy as it seemed. Suspicion had taught him to be cunning.

The intimacy between him and Eglée grew apace ; there was no suggestion of tenderness in it, in neither was there an *arrière pensée*. It was simply the comradeship of two children of the people drawn together by environment. Lange liked to talk to Eglée because it helped to kill the dreary hours. He did not regard her as a prisoner, because she was utterly unlike all the others in detention and belonged to his own sphere. He understood her ; her bold, free way of talking reminded him of his own former habits ; it was the unlicensed manner of the Faubourg which

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considered itself the sovereign people. He liked to listen to her diatribes ; it was pleasant to hear some one else express what he secretly thought but dared not utter. At first he was on his guard, but in three days they spoke without reserve. The bond between them was the recollection of past associations. After a pleasant chat in *argot* with a girl of his own station, thoroughly acquainted with his life and habits, which are her own, what inexperienced youth placed like Lange could withstand the following attack—

“See here, my friend, what’s the good of pretending to me you love this cursed Revolution which won’t let either of us do as we please without the threat of the guillotine ? You know you hate it as much as I do ; why, you are almost as much of a prisoner, in the Conciergerie as I am. I know if you could manage it you would take off that uniform, which by the way doesn’t improve your beauty, my friend. Now if you could throw up this slave’s work and have an easy time of it again without any risk you would jump at it—say, wouldn’t you ?”

Eglée spoke frankly and pulled him familiarly by one of the buttons of his national uniform.

“Vive la révolution !” he said ; but there was meaning in his glance that Eglée understood.

“Vive la révolution !” she replied aloud, and added

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in an undertone, "Citizen, isn't it possible for us to escape from this prison?" •

It was the first time she had suggested the idea. The youth looked at her in positive terror; there was suspicion in the mere whisper of such a thing; he felt the retribution of the Republic like a sword of Damocles hanging by a hair over his head.

"Hush, girl!" he whispered, glancing furtively at the municipal guards in the court.

"You fool!" said Eglée softly, "nobody heard. Think it over."

Thus did she sow her seed, having first prepared the ground to receive it. The Duc d'Amboise, to whom she duly reported her progress, said—

"God! Now don't go near him for a whole day. You have frightened him, your stopping away from him will frighten him still more. He will think it over, never fear; he will not be able to think of anything else. His anxiety will be such that to rid himself of it he will listen to any scheme. Make a point of talking to another guard. Lange will notice it, and, knowing you as he does, will think that to make sure of escape you will have more than one string to your bow, it will give him confidence. If he has not taken the bait when you next approach him you can threaten him with informing against him

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to the other guards ; you can magnify the confidences you have wormed out of him. Intimidation will bring him quickly to terms, for I gather that he is a coward. When he is willing to listen to the idea of escape, which of course you must make clear he is to participate in and benefit from, come to me for further instructions. Only when he is fully in your power mention my name to him."

The corruption of a municipal guard on duty in the prison was by no means a wild dream. Throughout the Terror there were cases of disaffected jailers ; their employment was the most irksome and detestable of all in the catalogue of the Republic ; now and then municipal guards were seduced from their allegiance by sympathy excited by the prisoners with whom in guarding they had become intimate, or by bribery guaranteeing their own personal safety. From many instances of this the government of the Republic was fully aware of the little reliance to be placed on the jailers, wherefore by guillotining those whom it caught in treachery, and instituting a system of espionage of one jailer on another, it intimidated the municipal guards in the Twelve Houses of Arrest into a compulsory zeal.

After a day of pronounced neglect Eglée returned to Lange and at once began the conversation where she had previously left it off.

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"Well, citizen, have you thought of what I said about escape?"

"You will bring me to the guillotine, girl!" he whispered, looking around him with a sly and frightened glance.

"You will arrive there without my help," she replied, "if you stop here. Do you know what that sour-faced guard said to me yesterday?" and she indicated with her eyes the jailer she had conversed with throughout the previous day. "He said it was suspicious for you to be as friendly with a prisoner as you were with me. So we had better lose no time in getting away."

Eglée's words frightened Lange; the thought that he might already be suspected was intolerable. As the Duc d'Amboise had opined, he had passed a day of intense anxiety, excited by the temptation of Eglée's words and her subsequent neglect, which he interpreted adversely. His position, irksome before, was now full of danger. The instinct of self-preservation developed cunning.

"So," he replied, "Citizen Boulet said it was suspicious for us to be seen talking together; well, go away now and let me think it all over. To-morrow we can speak about it, but go now—go. See, Boulet is looking at us!"

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His mind was in complete disorder, it contained but one thought—flight, flight immediate and alone. • He was too inexperienced and unnerved to frame any plan, to get away as fast and as secretly as possible was his sole idea. A veritable net of suspicion entangled him ; might not Eglée herself be dangerous ? He would not dare to trust her. There is no support in a reed ; it is better to deal with a clever villain than with a weak fool, as the two plotters found to their cost.

Eglée left Lange satisfied with her work, and passing the Duc d'Amboise she stopped for a moment to say, " All goes well."

That night Lange complained to the warder of the prison of feeling unwell, and asked to be relieved of his duty for a few days. The leave was granted. The next day, to the astonishment of Eglée and the Duc d'Amboise, Lange did not appear, nor on the following.

" I hope he hasn't betrayed us," said the aristocrat, " something has happened. Were you very cautious, Eglée ? "

" He would not dare to betray us," she replied, " he would be afraid of the consequences. I'll ask Boulet what has become of him."

" Oh," said Boulet coolly when she questioned him, " he won't come back any more. When you try to

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get a guard to help you escape don't frighten him out of his wits, it puts you out of his mind ; for it's easier for one to get away than two. He was recognised at the barrier of Clichy, the fool ! and taken to the Abbaye. He confessed everything and put the blame on you, and begged for mercy, but Fouquier sends him to the guillotine to-night. I shouldn't be surprised if you followed him to-morrow."

Hope built so high and so confidently was at once dashed to the nadir. Eglée reeled as if struck and caught hold of the arm of the guard for support. She recovered herself almost instantly.

"That's a fine joke !" she said with a laugh as she walked away. But she knew she had betrayed herself, and added to the knowledge of the wrecking of the plot it made her very despondent.

When a chance offered she told her story with all its fears to the Duc d'Amboise.

"I was half afraid it was going too smoothly to succeed," he said, "plots are never good for anything that seem cocksure of success from the start. Lange was a fool, we are well rid of him ; with his craven heart he would have been of no use to us. Now we will try another plan." He spoke cheerily to give Eglée courage ; from experience he knew that a dejected accomplice was a clog to action.

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His fertile brain was not long in finding another scheme ; he was now in his element. His imperturbable manner restored Eglée's confidence as it was meant to do. Wildly impossible as his new idea seemed, she nevertheless expressed no surprise at it ; futile in the conception of an intrigue herself, she had nothing to say ; the Duc d'Amboise had brains, and she would trust implicitly in him.

"Eglée," he said, "Boulet is our man ; I shall talk to him myself !"

The seemingly rash announcement did not startle her, but she felt a pang that she was now by the turn of chance entirely dependent on him ; the tables were turned. Oh ! for a soothing token of love in the midst of all this terrible excitement and anxiety !

Boulet, the municipal guard, was unmistakably a republican of the Revolution. Like all sansculottes vested with authority, he was surly in appearance and brutal in disposition. Known as the avowed enemy of all adversaries of the Revolution, it was rumoured that he had taken an active part in the September Massacres, and he was shunned by all the prisoners in the Conciergerie. Eglée had been the first to accost him, the Duc d'Amboise was the second. His ugly national uniform, embellished with two pistols stuck in the belt, from which hung a short, unsheathed

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sword, added to the repulsion he inspired. That such a man could be corrupted seemed a labour worthy of Hercules. He glared sourly as the Duc d'Amboise approached.

"So, citizen," said the undaunted aristocrat plotter, "you have been frightening Eglée with the guillotine; haven't you got any bowels of mercy for one of your own class?"

"I know my business," the guard replied gruffly.

"And I know mine, citizen," said the Duc d'Amboise coolly. "I am going to tell it to you, for it has something to do with you."

The municipal guard shrugged his shoulders as if it made not the slightest difference to him, but he said nothing, for his curiosity was aroused.

"I'll wager you'll take an interest in it, for all your savage look. I know you have dipped your hands in aristocrat blood, and would do so again; you like that sort of thing, and the Republic knows it. But the only reward you will ever get for the dirty work you have done is the free delight of seeing the Republic's enemies suffer and die. You are a good watchdog, and you will never be anything else. Now I'll swear this employment, which is so paying and so amusing, is the only reward the Republic will give you."

The Duc d'Amboise uttered this insulting speech

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boldly, looking the man full in the face. A more delicate mode of address would have been futile. The straightforwardness of the attack, for which he was unprepared, astonished the guard.

"I have got a proposition to make to you," continued the Duc d'Amboise in the same tone. "It doesn't matter at all if you refuse ; you can't do me more harm than threatens me already. Now listen attentively and look at me."

He added the last words imperiously, and Boulet instinctively recognised the tone of command. The guard spat on the ground as a sign of contempt ; nevertheless he looked at the prisoner as he was bidden.

"You know perfectly well who I am without my telling you," said the aristocrat. "You call me the *ci-devant* Duc d'Amboise, but I tell you I do not acknowledge your republican epithet. You needn't shrug your shoulders and spit ; it is bad manners. You wonder what you have to do with my business ? Listen. I am bored with waiting for death in this prison ; I wish either to go to the guillotine at once or to be free. The latter is a wish not to be realised, but you can help me to the former."

There was a great deal of curiosity in the sullen regard of the municipal. With a scornful chuckle he said—

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"You are right there, my pretty aristocrat ; you'll go to the guillotine sure enough. •A day sooner or later, it is all the same." •

"I must go at once if I am going. • Such a lover of blood, such a partisan of the Republic as you, should be glad to help me on the road to the scaffold. If you go to Fouquier and inform him that it was I who corrupted Lange, he will bring me at once to trial and I shall not deny the charge. Now, if you wish to show your zeal for the Republic, here is your chance. You know what your reward will be ? The Committee of Public Safety will say, 'Here is a true patriot, a most useful and valuable servant of the sovereign people, and like all true patriots he wants no pay for doing his duty. He has shown himself worthy of his post. Let him continue at it, a true and tried servant.' What more can you desire, citizen ? "

The Duc d'Amboise stopped short and looked at the municipal guard with a mocking smile. Boulet, who had listened to this speech with every mark of surprise, now glanced quickly around the prison and brought his eyes back to the Duc d'Amboise with an expression of malignant fear. It was the era of preternatural suspicion. Under the extraordinary attitude of the aristocrat Boulet was quick to see a motive, all the more dangerous for being masked.

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“Dog of an aristocrat!” he said, but, like the Duc d’Amboise, instinctively careful that his words should not be overheard. “There is no safety for a man while a single royalist head remains! There should have been universal butchery, instead of packing the prisons with traitors. What new trick is this? There is some underhand treachery meant to ruin me in what you say. What is it, you swine of an aristocrat?”

“Gently, citizen,” said the Duc d’Amboise, “remember we live in an age of equality and fraternity.” And he laughed lightly.

His manner with the municipal guard was like that of one who breaks a vicious horse to saddle—the animal kicks and bucks and rears, but recognises the master by his coolness and skill.

The Duc d’Amboise suddenly dropped his mocking air, and moving closer to the guard whispered eagerly—

“Citizen, if you refuse to help me to die, then help me to live. My reward will be far better than the Republic’s. There is a plot in the prison, I tell you, and when discovered the vengeance of Fouquier will fall alike on the jailers and the prisoners that have not escaped. You know this as well as I. From the Republic you have everything to fear, from me everything to hope. Help me and the girl Eglée to

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escape ; once out of the Conciergerie I know how to get us all three safely out of France. You hate aristocrats, be it so. But they know how to pay for services rendered them. Instead of a jailer treated like a dog by the Republic you have now an opportunity to become a person worthy of notice. I will show you how to make terms with the Republic so that you can even return to France in safety. *For by informing the Republic of the movements of the Emigrés you can demand a pardon for your services.* I tell you the road to success is easier my way than stopping here watching prisoners all your life. Citizen, will you help me ? ”

It was a proposition more than Machiavellian, the consummate blending of subtlety and boldness was startling. The municipal guard instinctively respected the brain that could conceive it. For the ground-note of the hatred and fear of the people was the knowledge that debase the aristocrats as they might they could not put themselves on an equality of education and intelligence ; no revolution, however thorough, could perform this in a day, it was the result of long, tedious years. All wanted this equality ; the Third Estate vibrated with the intense desire of it, which in revolutionary despair it knew was like sighing for the moon. It was the men with brains and education

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that easily went to the top. The Dantons, the Marats, the Robespierres, the Fouquieres reaped the reward that should have been everybody's. The people were the oxen that pulled the plough over the furrowed field, the crop was reaped by the drivers. The brutalised municipal guard knew his inferiority, it was like the shackle of a slave ; he wanted some of the great gains of the people, he had worked hard for them, doing all the dirty and dangerous work of the Revolution. He hated the aristocrats and all enemies of the new order, he would willingly kill or drive them all out of France, but he wished a share of the spoils that remained. It was not enough to be given a jailership of prisons and forgotten, to be called citizen and looked on with suspicion. At a bound he was shown how he might acquire the importance he craved, a little treachery was all that was necessary. It was a diabolical temptation, such as only an aristocrat could devise, but it was the road to his desire, a short, straight cut. The outrageous sophistry of the aristocrat appealed to him ; it was an intelligence he could understand, there was no *finesse* in it, it was a perfectly plain and feasible piece of clever villainy—to betray the Republic to command its recognition, to use an aristocrat to betray aristocrats !

That he listened without interruption to the Duc

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d'Amboise and did not angrily reject his proposal and rush off breathing fire to denounce him to the Revolutionary Tribunal, told the aristocrat that his words had struck home. The Duc d'Amboise was, when he cared, as much of a student of human nature as the Comte de Beugnot, one more practical. He knew human nature and tried it with the usual crude test—bribery; the Comte de Beugnot, for all his philosophy and accomplishments, studied it microscopically, experimenting on it with scientific acumen. The one could have written an exhaustive treatise on the subject, proving his theories in detail; the other could by no means have done so. If he had a less intellectual grip, practical experience had given him a quicker and surer one. It was much the same as an old weather-beaten salt, without any knowledge of charts and the altitude of the sun, successfully navigating his craft by winds and currents where a landsman expert in the theory of navigation would be wrecked. Such was the Duc d'Amboise, whose weak and frivolous character was not worth the consideration of the astute Philosophe. Those we despise as fools are not necessarily fools. The case is a common one, and the fact does not seem to teach.

"I shall return for your answer shortly, citizen," added the Duc d'Amboise in a whisper, "I will not

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court suspicion by being seen talking to you too long and too earnestly. Remember, the girl is to go with us."

He walked toward a group that had been observing him, saying as he approached—

"I have just been talking to that Cerberus yonder ; he did us all the honour of calling us swine."

Boulet did not weigh the pros and cons of the situation, he made up his mind at once to accept the proposal. He was no chicken-hearted youth like Lange, but a man who in a rough practical way understood the truth of the saying "Nothing venture, nothing have." In his eyes it was a business transaction in which he had been offered goods of inestimable value to himself at a very cheap rate. He did not hesitate, he had too much common sense. It was like a man telling a rough who has waylaid him and means to plunder him without compunction, "I know where a treasure is to be found that will make us both rich. If you kill me I shall die with my secret and you will only get my watch, but if you let me live I will share the treasure with you."

"Have you made up your mind?" whispered the Duc d'Amboise some time later.

"Yes," replied Boulet, gruffly.

"When will you act?" asked the aristocrat

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imperiturbably. He felt like huzzaing, the corruption of such a man was a master-stroke ; no one would have dreamt of such a plan ; it proved he had not lost his cunning.

“To-night, when the prisoners go to their grilles, do you and the girl stop in the court near the big door. I am on duty alone and will see that the bolts are not fastened. After midnight I will open the door softly, just wide enough for you to pass out. All the guards will be on their mattresses in the guard-room. I will go in for a jug of water and shut the door behind me ; you and the girl can then slip out in the dark into the street ; go quickly into the first alley on the left—there are no lights in it, and it leads directly to the Seine. I will join you in it later, and we will go to the house of one of your friends and hide for a few days. After that you must get us out of Paris.”

“I have no one I will trust in Paris,” replied the Duc d’Amboise, “we must get out of the city to-night.”

“You are a fine aristocrat not to have any friends ; I suppose you think I will inform against them when I make my terms with the Republic ?”

“No, believe me, I will trust no friend ; besides, if they should happen to be under suspicion they would inform against us to clear themselves.”

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"Well, then; I won't undertake the job. I won't run the risk of losing my head by trying to creep through the barriers like Lange," said Boulet gruffly.

"Isn't there a boat we could get on the Seine and so pass the barriers by the river?"

"Yes, there is sure to be a boat alongside the grain barges at the Pont Neuf, but there is always a guard on duty there."

"Then," said the Duc d'Amboise, "he must be killed. You will first hail him, tell him prisoners have escaped from the Conciergerie, engage him in conversation, and dirk him quietly."

"You don't mind a bit of villainy, do you?" whispered Boulet. The plot was assuming a character he had not thought of, but he had gone too far now to retreat.

"Certainly not. I mean to sell my life dearly; and you, my friend, surely have no scruples about spilling blood, though in this case it will be somewhat coarser than you are accustomed to."

Boulet did not retort; the Duc d'Amboise now held the whip-hand and he intended the man should feel it. He quickly formed his plan and unfolded it to Boulet in a manner that showed he intended to be obeyed.

"You will kill the guard at the grain barge and we

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will take the boat and drift down the river. We will then disembark in the fields near Neuilly and go to a house I know of in the country. It belongs to the prince of conspirators, the Baron de Batz. It is a den of conspiracy ; they are on the look out all day and all night. I know de Batz well ; it is a safe place, and we can get away from there easily enough. You see the thing is simple. Now I leave you, Eglée and I will be at the door when you open it."

Boulet glared at him surlily as he walked away. He felt himself tricked ; this aristocrat, with his soft ways, was a clever and formidable villain, and Boulet was afraid of him.

When Eglée was informed of the success of the Duc d'Amboise she could with difficulty contain her delight.

"Ah, M. le Duc," she said, "I knew you had the brains if you would only use them." •

"They are yours, Eglée," he replied, "they work at your command."

She looked at him earnestly.

"M. le Duc, you make me almost forget what I am."

"Eglée," he said seriously, "our lives begin here in the Conciergerie, where all are equal ; let us think no more of the past."

CHAPTER X

THE LOTTERY OF SAINT-¹ GUILLOTINE

THE rest of that day was passed by both in agitation. Could they depend on Boulet? Might not chance have reserved this day of all others to summon one of them before the Revolutionary Tribunal? Would night never come?

It was now November, and the Conciergerie had lost all the gaiety and brilliancy it possessed when Eglée entered it. Most of the aristocrats had been executed and their places were filled by a bourgeois crowd who moved about the cold and dreary court in sullen gloom. As the hour drew near for the daily batch to go to the guillotine the suspense and melancholy of the prison became acute. The spirits of the Duc d'Amboise flagged; the tremendous strain of the past few days began to tell on his nerve; the splendid coolness he had displayed, and which

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was so necessary to him now, was shaken with dread. Realising the danger of losing his self-control, he went to the men's *grille* and threw himself on his mattress to try to sleep, in order to be fresh for the daring of the coming night. Eglée placed a stool near the door whose exit was the guillotine and sat with her back against the wall, waiting, waiting.

Darkness fell early in the winter afternoon ; the dim lamps were lit and their cheerless flicker suggested night, but night was still hours off. In the midst of her terrible suspense the great door was opened, there was a strident shout of many numbers, and Fouquier's *fournée* tramped solemnly out of the court. It was the hour of the setting of the sun when the tumbrils went to the guillotine ; Eglée knew the work of the Revolutionary Tribunal was over for the day. It meant safety ; suspense gave place to excitement. The night had commenced. By degrees the prisoners dribbled out of the draughty court to their mattresses ; the darkness of the cells invited sleep, which was to them forgetfulness. Their disappearance seemed to Eglée to bring the hour of escape nearer. Suddenly there was a disturbance without, the muffled echo of it penetrated the stone walls ; then the chains and bolts of the great door were drawn and through the open doorway came a posse of men with something

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struggling in their midst. A terrible panic invaded Eglée, robbing her mind of all thought. Some great and unexpected danger had arrived, the plot was ruined ! Suspense became positive pain, hope disappeared. The court refilled immediately with prisoners frightened from their cells. The men who had thus disturbed the quiet of the prison rid themselves roughly of their burden and departed with much noise. The thing they had brought into the Conciergerie writhed on the pavement, and curiosity collected a crowd round it. Her spasm of wild terror had passed with the withdrawal of the men and Eglée joined the crowd. What she looked upon was grotesque in the extreme. The thing on the pavement hiccoughed and staggered to its feet. It was a man, decidedly drunk and dressed in *carmagnole complète*. But in spite of his wretched and sanscullotic appearance there was something about him which betrayed the aristocrat.

The Comte de Beugnot recognised him at once, and spoke to him.

"I know you, you are the Marquis de Châtelet. What are you doing in this disguise ? What has happened ?"

"I am innocent—innocent !" screamed the man. "I took the oath to the Republic. I have not broken it."

The Comte de Beugnot moved away in disgust.

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The condition of this apostate aristocrat disgusted him.

The curiosity of the crowd was satisfied, it fell away from the Marquis de Châtelet with cold contempt. He staggered about the court asserting his patriotism with a hiccoughing scream, and finally reeled forward on his face upon the pavement. He tried to rise again, but the fall had stunned him, and he was too drunk to start. After many ineffectual attempts he gave up the effort and fell into a heavy, drunken sleep. The prisoners withdrew to their mattresses again, and Eglée, nervous and excited, went back to her stool by the door. The night seemed to her far advanced. Why did the Duc d'Amboise not come? How could they escape with that drunken brute sprawled there in the centre of the court? Might he not awake at any moment and disturb the whole prison again? The night was cold, but the sweat stood in beads on Eglée's brow, and her hands were clammy.

And now once again the great door opened noisily, waking the entire prison. Eglée, mute with despair, sat rooted to her stool. Escape seemed impossible on such a night and she felt a premonition of failure.

This time it was only a very old woman led in between two municipal guards, who at once withdrew. The

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old woman shook like one with a palsy, and the stick she carried tapped the pavement with the vibration of her trembling. She looked around her stupidly and muttered in a quavering voice something about the *lever* of Madame de Pompadour. Some of the prisoners addressed her, but she did not answer. Eglée heard a voice say—

“She is very, very old, and frightened; most likely they have dragged her from her bed. Poor thing! what can she have done to arouse the suspicion of the Republic?”

Another voice replied, and Eglée recognised it as that of the Comte de Beugnot.

“My friends, I know this old lady. She is Madame la Maréchale de Mouchy, a suspect by her name. But she is harmless, and as deaf as destiny; her mind, like her body, is weak with the weight of over fourscore years. To arrest her is a brutal joke of Fouquier’s.”

At any other time Eglée’s pity would have been excited; she would have taken the old lady under her protection and in her bold way have poured all the invectives of the Faubourg on the Republic. Now she sat passive on her stool, while some one compassionately led the tottering prisoner away to the women’s *grille*. The incident broke the repose of the prison, and people discussed it excitedly without any thought

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of sleep. They denounced the tyranny of the Republic, forgetful that they were the children of the Revolution, which, like Saturn, was now devouring them; they spoke of the arrest of the *Maréchale de Mouchy* as an atrocity, though many of them a few months before had counselled the annihilation of all aristocrats; they furiously declared that Liberty and Justice were impossible while France was ruled by men dripping with the gore of innocent people, yet they themselves had loudly called for a bath of blood in which to cleanse the nation. It seemed to *Eglée* as if their voices would never cease and leaden-eyed slumber fall on the prison; and long after they had gone to their mattresses an indignant murmur came from the *grilles*.

She still continued to sit on her stool by the door, but hope had now completely departed from her. The restlessness and constant alarm of the night unnerved her. She had lost all idea of the time; such a night she had never known. Strong as she was, she felt that this long and terrible strain was more than even her strength could stand. At last the prison was absolutely still; not a sound came from the *grilles*, but the sight of the drunken aristocrat in the empty court tormented her with all sorts of fears. His heavy breathing fascinated her so that she could not take her eyes off

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him and she did not perceive the Duc d'Amboise till he was beside her.

"Eglée," he whispered, "at last !"

She looked up at him with a start and with difficulty kept a cry from bursting from her lips. He dropped on his haunches with his back to the hinges of the great door. His presence reassured her ; she felt an inexpressible sense of relief and her eyes filled with tears. They were alone, quite alone, for the first time in their acquaintance. The passion which the Comte de Beugnot had suggested was awake in him ; reaching up he put an arm round the girl's neck and drew her head down to his. His breath was like a powerful opiate enveloping her in ecstasy ; she felt his lips against hers, and in the stillness could hear the beating of his heart, to which her own was the echo. It was like the visitation of a god.

The clack of a sabot on the pavement of the court interrupted the embrace. With a sense of annoyance they remembered the plot. The Duc d'Amboise crouched at Eglée's side and tried to hide himself with her skirt. It was most essential that the intruder should not observe him ; the discovery of two prisoners at such an hour alone in the court by the door would be full of suspicion. They both felt they were lost. Suddenly Eglée gave a great sigh of relief, and drew her

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lover's hand, which she still held, tenderly to her lips. She recognised Couchette. The girl advanced, but when quite close started back in affright at the glimpse of a figure half-hidden by Eglée's side. Eglée beckoned to Couchette to approach. Reassured, she came forward again, and her sabots clacked loudly in the silent court.

"What do you want?" asked Eglée, in a fierce, angry whisper, "Don't you see I am engaged?"

Couchette now recognised the Duc d'Amboise; she was too surprised to utter a word and was withdrawing somewhat confusedly when Eglée stopped her.

"Pst! Couchette!" she whispered.

The girl turned round and Eglée beckoned her back again.

"Take off your shoes, you fool; you will wake the whole prison!"

Couchette obeyed. She had awaked and missing Eglée had, full of alarm, come in search of her. She had no suspicion that the companion on whom her existence depended was about to desert her. The Duc d'Amboise, who believed the plot was wrecked, was so relieved to find the intruder was only Couchette that he took one of the girl's hands in his and kissed it. But the innocent act excited Eglée's

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immoderate jealousy ; smiting Couchette's hand away she whispered fiercely—

“Go!”

Couchette, reassured by finding Eglée, went back to her *grille* swiftly and noiselessly, carrying her sabots in her hand. They watched her as she went, full of anxiety lest she might disturb the slumber of the prisoners, and after she had disappeared they gazed breathlessly in the direction of the *grilles* as if at any moment they expected some one to enter the court. But deep stillness reigned, in which the stertorous breathing of the drunken sleep of the Marquis de Châtelet sounded ominously loud.

The great door of the Conciergerie opened without their hearing it. A “Pst!” startled them, and glancing round they saw Boulet's head peering at them. They rose at once, and Eglée's skirt knocked over the stool she had been sitting on. The noise seemed terribly loud, the drunken Marquis de Châtelet moved uneasily in his sleep as if he were about to awake. The three trembled ; they dared not stir, they feared lest the slightest movement should wake somebody. One of the lamps had burnt itself out, and the court was almost in darkness, but the faint glimmer of the remaining lamp was to their excited minds like a blaze of light in which their every movement was being observed.

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The Duc d'Amboise was the first to recover himself; he slid through the narrow opening of the door, and was instantly followed by Eglée. Boulet closed the door very softly, leaving it unbolted, and for a second the three stood in the darkness, listening for a shout of alarm that did not come. At the end of the corridor in which they stood palpitating there was a ray of light like a wedge; it came from the open door of the guard-room. Inside a half-dozen men in the national uniform were stretched asleep on mattresses. Boulet went in quietly and closed the door behind him. Then as soon as the wedge of light disappeared the Duc d'Amboise and Eglée traversed the corridor as if they wore shoes of felt and passed out into the street, which was deserted at that late hour. Following Boulet's instructions with exactness, they turned into the alley he had indicated and waited for him. He was not long coming, but when he arrived he was trembling. The step he had taken could not be retraced; he realised its tremendous gravity. But to the two so long incarcerated freedom was a *fait accompli*. They stretched their limbs rapturously, like those released from chains, and opened their mouths to drink in the raw night air.

The alley led quickly to the Pont Neuf; it was very dark and they passed nobody on their way to the river.

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Leaning over the parapet of the bridge they saw the grain barges below, and on one of them the shadowy figure of an armell man paced up and down on guard. A cold, bleak wind was blowing down the Seine; it cut the poorly-clad Eglée to the bone. They left the bridge and took shelter against one of the great stone culverts on the quay.

"Go at once and hail the sentry as I told you," said the Duc d'Amboise to Boulet, "ask him if he has seen any suspicious persons lurking about, and watch your opportunity to kill him with your sword. Be sure you do it quietly."

But Boulet the surly, brutal guard was quite another man from Boulet the traitor seeking to escape. His courage had all gone to water, he had not the cool nerve requisite to do the deed.

The Duc d'Amboise uttered an oath.

"Give me your sword," he said, "and change clothes with me. I will do it!"

Boulet did not hesitate, and then and there in the biting wind the two men exchanged their clothing, while Eglée leaned against the culvert, shivering and fascinated with horror. Though they were the same height, Boulet was much older and more thick-set than the slender, graceful aristocrat. The exchange was grotesque in the extreme, but none of the three saw any humour in it.

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"Keep in the shadow here till I come back," said the Duc d'Amboise, "and don't stir."

He disappeared. With beating hearts they heard the sentry hail him and his voice in reply. They waited in silence in the shadow thrown by the culvert, expecting a shriek, a signal of alarm, a culmination of horrors. After what seemed an endless time there was a splash in the water, and they saw the Duc d'Amboise coming back. He had not been gone two minutes. In the uniform of the municipal guard he looked more forbidding than Boulet himself; the blade of the sword was dripping with fresh blood, his hands were covered with it.

"It was clumsily done," he said in a tone of great disgust, "and perfectly useless. There is no boat there, Boulet, you liar, not a sign of one!"

"What shall we do?" asked Boulet helplessly.

"Do?" said the Duc d'Amboise imperiously. "First of all, let me get back into my own clothes. I don't wish these bloody things on me. Come, change!"

Like all bullies, Boulet when danger threatened was cowed. He never thought of taking offence at the Duc d'Amboise, whose manner to him was as rough and brutal as his own; the terror of his situation precluded all other thoughts; in the aristocrat he saw

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his only chance of safety. Eglée too was terrified, unnerved by the tense strain. The Duc d'Amboise alone had presence of mind. When once more clad in his own clothes he said—

“Now, we have no time to lose, we must find a place to hide in; there is no chance of escaping from the city by the river to-night. That fellow down there thought I was a friend; well, there is one revolutionist the less to prey on aristocrats. Bah!” And he shook himself like a dog coming out of water.

“We are lost!” muttered Boulet, “we are lost!”

“We shall be if you whine like that,” said the Duc d'Amboise. “Follow me, and ask no questions.”

His boldness and intrepidity inspired confidence. From past experience he knew the danger of being hampered with timorous people. They crossed the Pont Neuf and walked rapidly and silently through deserted streets, till they reached the Rue de Lille. It suddenly dawned upon Boulet that the Duc d'Amboise was going to take refuge in his own house in this street.

“M. le Duc,” he said in alarm, “don't go to the Hôtel d'Amboise, it is dangerous; when you are missed to-morrow that is the first place they will search!”

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"The last you mean ; and besides, I know its capabilities as a hiding-place."

Boulet said nothing further, it was his only suggestion, and was treated with ridicule ; he felt unequal to play the game of this bold, clever young aristocrat ; it required *nerve*, and he possessed none.

The Republican motto and the words, "National Property," stamped on the ashlar wall of his hôtel made the Duc d'Amboise flush with anger. The great iron gates of the sculptured portal were locked ; through the railing the court-yard looked dilapidated and gloomy in the bleak winter night. The door of the porter's lodge at which Jean Laforge had waited for Eglée five years before was likewise fastened ; there were no other means of ingress. The Duc d'Amboise put his shoulder against the door, but it did not yield.

"Come," he said, "we must press against it together with all our might."

They rushed at it like a battering-ram and tore the lock from its staple. The Duc d'Amboise rubbed his shoulders and walked in, followed by Eglée. The room was filled with a darkness that could be felt ; suddenly Boulet, who had remained in the empty street, peering suspiciously up and down, rushed in crying—

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"The patrol is coming! He must have heard as we burst in the door!"

"Nonsense," came the voice of the Duc d'Amboise from the impenetrable depths of the room, "if he crosses the threshold, I will kill him. Give me your sword."

They stood in breathless suspense, unable to see one another, watching the doorway through which the lesser darkness of the night was visible. The patrol passed by; they could hear his steps echoing in the direction of the Rue du Bac.

"He did not notice the door," said the Duc d'Amboise, "it will give them a clue to-morrow. But it makes no difference, we will climb the wall and drop into the garden of the deserted Hôtel de Choiseul, where we will hide till to-morrow night, when we can make another try for the river. How the devil do we get out of this room?"

While they all groped for a door which they could not find they heard the tramp of feet again.

"The patrol suspected," said Boulet, "he is bringing a squad from the guard-house in the Rue du Bac."

"For God's sake, where is the door? This room is a *cul de sac*!" cried the aristocrat.

The tramp of feet stopped and lanterns were flashed into the room.

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"Surrender yourselves in the name of the Republic!" said a voice.

Resistance was absolutely useless, the plot was a failure. The Duc d'Amboise looked quickly round the half-lit room to find the exit the lack of which had been their ruin. The door they sought was open, it seemed impossible that they could have missed it. The three gave themselves up quietly. Boulet and Eglée were stupid with fear—Boulet for himself; Eglée at the sudden dashing of all her hopes, at the certain end to her dream of happiness.

"Citizens," cried a man, "there has been treachery to-night at the Conciergerie. I recognise this man as the *ci-devant* Duc d'Amboise in the time when there were titles; he has escaped from the Conciergerie, where he has been imprisoned since the death of Marat. And I know the woman, she was arrested for exciting a riot in the Place de la Révolution. Citizens, we have made a big haul!"

The Duc d'Amboise answered cheerily—

"Well, we made a bold try for escape, and we have failed, it is the fortune of the game. Come, lead us back; you have three more heads for the guillotine!"

They were marched off, not together, but apart, roughly and strongly guarded. At the Conciergerie the sleeping sentinels were awakened; they jumped up

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in horror at the news and the sight of the unbolted door of the court? With atrocious insults the three were shoved in ; then the alarm was sounded and the whole prison awakened from its slumber, gathered a-tremble in the court of the Conciergerie while the roll-call was read.

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CHAPTER XI

AT THE REVOLUTIONARY TRIBUNAL

WHEN the municipal guards had finished calling the list and withdrawn the court of the Conciergerie became vocal. All that the tongue contains in caustic satire and gross abuse was poured out as from a vial of spiteful poisons. The wretched three were reviled and taunted with treachery to their fellow-sufferers. Royalists and republicans united in twitting, teasing, goading, insulting ; and as if it were a loop-hole through which he might escape, Boulet, too, raised his voice in denunciation, and added his coward's whine to the noisy jargon of reproach and mockery, which just stopped short of personal violence. At last it became unbearable from its maddening monotony, and the Duc d'Amboise cried out angrily in a voice that was loud and imperious—

“Have done, I say ! We only did what was

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natural ; there is not one of you canaille but would betray the whole prison to escape. Miserable, cowardly curs, I will take care to acquit you all to Fouquier of any complicity in my ill-starred effort to be free! Have done, then !”

Whether his words would have stopped the irritating buzz of abuse Eglée did not give a chance to prove. With one arm on her hip, and brandishing the other in front of her, she shouted, after the manner of the women in the Faubourg when preparing for a fight—

“Silence ! Canaille ! or I will choke the whine out of your throats with these hands ! You cowards, the guillotine is the fate you all deserve !”

It had the required effect ; she looked so ready to put her threat into execution that a space was cleared around her and the Duc d'Amboise, and Boulet relapsed into his sullen fear. But peace did not come to the excited prison, and the prisoners moved to and fro in the half-lit, gloomy court, which had become like a cage of angry magpies.

“They are not worth losing one's temper over. Eglée,” said the Duc d'Amboise. “They have reason to be enraged ; we have added to the danger they are in. Fouquier will make more than our lives pay for this night's work.”

Eglée made no reply, she was not in the mood for

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talking. The failure of the plot, the sudden headlong fall from the giddy height of expectation to which she had risen, smote her like a blow from a clenched fist. She was dazed, her mind was capable of holding but one thought which revolved itself eternally—her life was drawing to a close, and she wanted to live. Never before had she realised how healthy and strong she was, never before had she realised the boundless possibilities of happiness. She was conscious of a dull pain, not to be described, not to be located.

The Duc d'Amboise stretched himself idly on the pavement of the court. He was quite composed; he no longer felt the earnestness, the manliness which Eglée's personality had awakened in him. As far as he was concerned the world was nearly at an end, and nothing was of any use whatsoever. To wring one's hands or to prepare oneself stoically for death, or to dash away the dark remnant of life in a drunkenness of passion, would be ridiculous; contemptuous indifference was the sole attitude for such a situation as the present. The thought of his late display of energy angered him, he wondered that he had been foolish enough to attempt to bargain with Fate. And his sudden hot passion for Eglée? The taste of love at such a time was sour to him. Love? It was merely a spark thrown out by a consuming log that

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was extinguished as it flared up. And the Duc d'Amboise yawped, and turning himself over on his side tried to sleep.

A sound of weeping entered his dreams and troubled them. He awoke. The grey light of a winter dawn filled the prison, the prisoners were still walking to and fro anxiously. He sat up, feeling cold and stiff. He remembered that it was the last day of his life. The sound of weeping continued, mingled with a soft, soothing voice. The Duc d'Amboise knew the voice, its effect on him was like a reproach that one knows one deserves. He turned his head and saw Couchette, like a frightened child, holding Eglée's tattered skirt in her hand as if the touch was in itself protection. He mechanically put out his hand and touched the skirt too, then the idea struck him as ludicrous bathos, and he laughed a short, discordant laugh. The "thought of the past, before he bade farewell to Versailles and fled over the marches with the Princes of the Blood in order to affront France, was a grotesque contrast to the present with its amour with a fille de joie of the lowest people and a shameful public death on the guillotine.

Eglée looked at the man at her feet and seemed to divine his misery. She felt he needed her; all her strength and masterfulness came back to her. Death

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lost its terror for her, it was enough for her to know he was to be her companion at the scaffold. She no longer regarded him as her lover, but something far more noble, even holy; and the solemnity of the situation seemed to her to have purified her. To be the companion in death of the man she loved made her his equal as nothing else could.

But the glamour of Versailles and Trianon could not demagnetise Eglée's personality. In spite of himself the Duc d'Amboise was glad that Eglée loved him, he liked to feel that she was near him; there was something about her that did him good. Could it be possible that he loved this girl after all? Whatever this strange emotion bred from the propinquity of the prison, no man or woman ever had such an influence on him as this girl of the people. He rose to his feet and stood beside the two girls; no words passed between any of them, but the silence, broken now and then by a sob from Couchette, had a meaning that words could not express. And thus the three waited.

At eight o'clock the door of the Conciergerie was opened, and a squad of municipal guards entered armed with pistols and drawn swords. One of them carried in his hand the fatal list riddled with the pricks of Fouquier's pin. In a loud, staccato voice he read

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the names of those summoned to trial, and a terrible hush fell on the crowded court—the hush of exquisite fear. It was to all the supreme moment of fate, the materialisation of the frightful Biblical prophecy of the meeting of Man with God. One by one as their names were called the prisoners stepped out from the throng and passed under the control of the armed guard. No word, no cry, was uttered; the whole scene was like the work of an automaton that has been wound up.

When Eglée's turn came Couchette followed, still holding the skirt of her friend in her hand. A guard smote her back brutally, but the clutch with which her fingers held Eglée's skirt did not relax, and a shred of it was in her hand as she fell back. Eglée turned a moment and said kindly—

“Courage, Couchette, girl!”

But the words fell on ears that did not hear. As if her legs had been mowed off, Couchette sank to the pavement in a swoon. Too mean for Fouquier to notice, for history to remember, one cannot find a record of her fate. Did Napoleon's “whiff of grape-shot” that exploded the Revolution give her freedom? Was she one of the inmates of the madhouse of Bicêtre whom the Terror made imbecile? Or did she, too, drive in the tumbrils and meet Samson face face? Who shall tell?

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It was a motley crowd that assembled at the Revolutionary Tribunal, men and women of all classes of society. The *fournée* was enormous. There was not room for all to sit, and many stood in a stifled, speechless group, squeezed together and closely surrounded by municipal guards. Opposite the prisoners, like caged beasts at feeding-time, were the *Vengeurs* of the revolution, the men and women who did the dirty work of the Republic. The decree excluding the women of Paris from being present at the trials was not yet in force, and free access to the Revolutionary Tribunal was one of the most cherished prerogatives of the people who came here daily to whet their cannibalistic appetite, just as later they slaked their thirst for blood at the guillotine. A tricolor ribbon kept them from swarming over the court, and ineffectual as this barrier seemed it was respected as the symbol of the Republic One and Indivisible of the people in divine right of insurrection. Behind it the mob raged, and as the spirit moved it swayed the scales of equity, but to burst the slender barrier it never attempted. Fouquier from experience had learned how to manage it. Like a lion-tamer in a den of lions, he held sway in the Revolutionary Tribunal, and the mob answered to his adroit flattery and was in turn coaxed and cowed.

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This man was the Torquemada of the Revolution ; to him love of power was a passion only in so far as it gratified his love of cruelty. Perfectly passionless himself, he made use of the passions of the people to accomplish his ends. It was he who made terror terrible, and in his hand the Law of the Suspect was a weapon more fell than the club of Hercules. The bath of blood that mad Marat called for he provided ; the vial of insults that the foul Père Duchêne filled he poured out. The blade of the guillotine was not sharper than his thin lips and acid voice ; steel was not colder and harder than his small, unflinching eyes ; hunger was not more ravenous than his lean, wolfish face. And his mirth—for there was mirth in him—was the glee of a cat at play with a mouse. If the laws of the Republic were just, he interpreted the justice as retribution. Cruelty with him was not fanaticism, but a pastime which he had perfected into a fine art. To-day he was in the humour for a holocaust. Plots in the prison were to him as the Christians to Nero—an excuse for the gratification of a passion for cruelty that was curbed by nothing save his own barbaric will. The Revolutionary Tribunal was his amphitheatre, the prisoners were his victims, and the populace his lions ; the slaughter was the word uttered by his thin, decisive voice. The very spirit of antiquity was

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at hand ; there lacked nothing of the Roman game but its pomp and splendour. •

He reviewed the *fournés* before him, with a glance as merciless as the lunge of a bayonet, and picking up his list cried out the first name that struck his fancy. It was that of Madame la Maréchale de Mouchy, a traveller to the Styx who had lost her way and arrived there now belated. Leaning on her stick and shaking with palsy, the stone-deaf, doting octogenarian was supported to the bar between two municipal guards. Neither Fouquier nor his lions saw anything tragically pathetic or absurdly repellant in such a sight. Her name called up the memory of her husband who fifty years before had at the command of the Pompadour led Louis Quinze's armies into Germany to carve out a province beyond the Rhine for his master—an ambition that had ended in the carnage of Frenchmen and the humiliation of France. The arm of revenge had been shackled then, but now it was free, and it reached forth and caught what remained of that remote era of disgrace in its clutch. In the harvest of Time the life of Madame de Mouchy had not been reaped ; she had lasted like a withered stalk in a stubble field.

Fouquier asked her her name, which was answered for her in a shriek of rage by the mob of *sansculottes*

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and poissardes. He then charged her with conspiracy, but Madame de Mouchy did not hear, nor if she had heard would she have understood the sense of the words. It was explained to Fouquier that she was deaf and stupid, and stretching his thin lips over his teeth he said with what he meant for mirth—

“Put it that she conspired stupidly,” and forthwith condemned her to death.

Madame de Mouchy was led away, happily for her in nowise realising her position, and her place at the bar was taken by another lady of the loftiest rank, the Duchesse de Biron, widow of the famous Heron Plume Duc de Biron. In spite of the fact that her husband, who had turned republican and become General in the Revolutionary Army, had been executed as a traitor, the Duchesse de Biron was not even a suspect and had been arrested by mistake. Fouquier indicted her with the charge against her steward, in place of whom she had been apprehended.

“But I am not the person you mean,” she said.

“No matter,” replied Fouquier, “you ought to be.”

And she too was sent to the guillotine.

Then followed the unfortunate Bailly, first Mayor of Paris, and once chief idol of the people, now broken here, accused of every crime political in the Republican Calendar, and doomed. At this very bar

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less than a month ago he had been a witness at the trial of Marie Antoinette. When asked if he knew her he had said simply, with a Court bow in her direction, "Yes, I know Madame"; while the Comte d'Estaing, a whilom favourite at Versailles, was also summoned to give evidence, which he did cowardly, insulting the fallen queen. But his republican attitude had not availed him, and he too now followed Bailly to the guillotine, both guilty before the Republic, to which the chivalry of the one and the lack of it in the other were equally suspicious. But as if to prove that this was not a tribunal or massacre, but a court of equity, Fouquier next gravely lifted the charge of suspicion from the Comte de Beugnot, who astutely defended himself and was at once escorted to the street and cast at liberty, being greeted by *vivats* and embraced with a fraternity almost as terrible as death. As Fouquier's list was a long one no trial lasted over ten minutes, and in some instances several were tried together when arraigned on the same charge. The three plotters were, however, tried separately, but in succession; they had expected that they would be the first to be called by Fouquier, but as he had determined on the death of nearly the whole *fournée* he did not consider their crime to be as important as they themselves did, and

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they heard the death-sentence passed on many before their turn came.

Boulet, the municipal guard, was the first of the three indicted. One question only had been asked him when from the mob, held in leash, as it were, behind the tricolor ribbon, there burst forth a roar of "Traitor ! Traitor !" He approached the bar of the Tribunal in a craven manner and appealed to Fouquier not to condemn him without hearing what he had to say. When order was restored to the court he turned towards the mob, and cringingly proclaimed his devotion to the Republic. He begged his judges to remember that he had always been a patriot, and recalled the part he had played in the September Massacres. He denounced all aristocrats and the Duc d'Amboise in particular, to whose serpent temptation in a moment of weakness he had fallen a victim. Perhaps at another time his cowardly plea might have availed him, but he failed now to win the sympathy that would save him. His craven manner and hideous appearance, heightened by his uniform, which was spattered with the blood of the man murdered at the grain barge, was revolting even to the coarse natures of the people to whom he appealed.

"See !" cried a woman, "the blood of September is still on him !"

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"No!" shrieked Boulet, losing all hope. "No, it is the blood of a citizen murdered last night by yonder traitor and aristocrat, who forced me to change clothes with him that he might avoid suspicion. It is true; I swear it! Down with the aristocrats! Citizens, you see what they can do, and now I, a patriot and an innocent man, have become their victim. Oh, mercy, mercy!"

The Duc d'Amboise listened to this tirade callously, but not so Eglée.

"It is a lie, you cur!" she cried, in her most brazen people's way. "Put the blame on yourself where it belongs, and don't shirk it on to others like a coward!"

Her words touched the pulse of the mob; it roared—

"Yes, put the blame on yourself! You knew what devils aristocrats were, you should have kept out of their snares!"

The *poissardes* called aloud for his blood and reviled him obscenely; the jury and Fouquier stared at him coldly, waiting for the tumult to subside to finish him; the very prisoners regarded him with horror; his glance of abject terror caught that of Eglée glaring at him with a tigerish gleam. In a voice that quaked with fear he begged again for mercy, fell on his knees

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and whined to the jury, and now and then his shrieked "Vive la révolution!" rose above the uproar. But it was all to no purpose, and Fouquier, who had permitted him to monopolise a considerable amount of time for the double reason of the pleasure he took in the man's agony and the example he was to municipal guards in general, now rose and decreeing him a traitor sentenced him to death and confiscated his goods. Boulet uttered a scream and fell in a fit; two guards picked him up, and carrying him out threw him roughly into a tumbrel.

This disgusting scene over Fouquier called Eglée. She did not stand in front of the bar of the Revolutionary Tribunal, but mounted the tribune, and folding her arms on her bust looked scornfully and proudly over the court. A vile epithet was hurled at her by a woman of the mob; somewhere in that seething mass she recognised Manette and also Jean Laforge. The sight of them put her into ungovernable fury; if they were called as witnesses against her she determined to come down from the tribune and strangle them; her rage seemed to give her the strength of a giantess. The voice of Fouquier addressing her recalled her to her situation.

"You are arraigned on two charges," he said, "they

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are very grave. First, you are accused of complicity with the woman Capet in a plot to free her from the Temple. Second, you are accused of advocating royalist ideas and spreading them through the streets, endeavouring to corrupt honest citizens, and attempting to stop the execution of the justice of the Republic. What have you to say in your defence?"

Eglée tossed her head and laughed in her ribald way—

"By my faith, you are funny!" she said. "A joke of a judge! *I*, an accomplice of her whom you call the Widow Capet, but who, in spite of your teeth, was the Queen of France all the same! *I*, a poor girl who gained my living at the corner of streets as *I* could and would not have been allowed to approach a scullion of her kitchen—*I*, an accomplice! Ha-ha! Citizen Fouquier, you are very worthy of your crew of knaves and fools, to bring such a charge against me. That's my answer to Number One."

It was indeed a ridiculous accusation, carrying a lie on its face, and, in spite of her sally, Eglée at once obtained the favour of the Tribunal. With a triumphant glance and mocking voice she cried to Fouquier—

"Citizen, before I reply to Number Two I wish to summon from that pack of dogs there two witnesses

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against me. Remember, not for me, but against me—the Citizen Laforge and the tricôteuse Manette. In my own defence I will undertake to prove to you that Laforge, under his national uniform, is a traitor to the Republic worse than Boulet, and that Manette is a suspect, for I have seen her walking in the Faubourg arm in arm with one who cried ‘Vive la reine!’ And she is ready at a whisper from Danton to murder you, Citizen Fouquier, with her long knife that is rusty with the blood of Madame de Lambelle. Ha! you start, eh? Do you wish me to tell *all* I know? Remember, I know what I know, for have not citizens come to me in the Faubourg?”

The tone of her voice was so distinct that all could hear, and the words slipped slowly from her lips like liquid poison. There seemed to lurk hidden danger in every one of them. The hoarse croak of Manette, “It’s a lie!” came indistinctly; and Jean Laforge, smitten with fear, to paralysing attacks of which he was subject daily, tried to extinguish his identity in the mob, but he could not escape Eglée’s penetrating, triumphant eye. These two might have changed places, so inconsistent with their situation was their state of mind.

Fouquier, who lived in secret dread of assassination ever since the death of Marat, stared at Eglée as if he

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would read every secret of her heart. The jury, in which Eglée recognised men she knew only too well, glanced at one another nervously. The mob, too, was silent, full of curiosity and impressed by her unquestioned people's manner and appearance. As if by magic the prisoner in the tribune—wretched, insignificant, and friendless—had turned the tables on judge, jury, and spectators. She was guilty, if ever a prisoner in the Terror was; her defence was no defence, yet no advocate could have served her as well as she served herself. The words uttered at random, in a spirit of hatred and scorn, had, with all the suspicion they contained in an era of preternatural suspicion, thrown the whole Tribunal into a terrified curiosity.

One of the jury observed that probably she was drunk when she shouted the seditious cries imputed to her, and that without doubt she was drunk now, as her speech to the President of the Court proved. "Perhaps," he added, "she drank more than she could stand to fortify herself for the trial." Some other jurymen coincided with their colleague's view. They seemed kindly disposed to her; they could save her. Eglée was clever enough to know she had scored. A swift, wild thought fled through her mind, shaping itself into action instantly—a thought winged with hope—hope even at this late hour. As one of the

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people she knew the temper of the people, and how easily they were worked on. She had seen Mademoiselle de Sombreuil drink the blood of aristocrats to save her father. She knew that the tiger people could be moved to mercy, a grandly, generous mercy, once it was excited. She knew, too, the power that lay in the fact that she was a fille de joie ; she did not need to prove she was one of the people, it was stamped all over her. For the first time she gloried in her unutterable past, it should save her and her lover as well. To save herself would be easy ; the mob was already in her favour, and even Fouquier was indifferent. Once freed could she not win the life of the Duc d'Amboise ? Would not the generosity that freed her be touched by the sentiment of a woman of the people pleading for the life of the man she loved ? It was worth trying. All this flashed through her brain while the jury commented on her intoxication.

“Yes, I was drunk,” she cried, “mad with drink ! It was not I who cried ‘Vive la reine !’ in the streets and led the mob into the Place de la Révolution, it was the drink in me, citizens.” I crave your kindness, I have great need of it. Look at me ! Is it possible that I, born in the Faubourg, who answered the tocsin when it sounded, who followed the tumbrils, can be

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an incorrigible aristocrat? It is impossible, it is ridiculous! I will give the lie to any one who dares to call me a royalist. I am one of the people. Vive la Révolution!"

"Your plea of innocence," said Fouquier, "must be substantiated. If any here know the prisoner, let them come forward and testify as to her character and sentiments before her arrest."

Three jurymen instantly rose in their places and declared that they had long known her, that she was of a wild, lawless nature, but good-hearted and honest, and that if she had expressed opinions contrary to the Republic it must have been due to drunkenness—a condition, they added, in which she had frequently been seen, and they besought the clemency of the judge in her behalf. The mob murmured assent; it was clearly in sympathy with her. Manette and Laforge both knew its temper and were silent, one from impotent rage and the other from fear of calling attention to himself. Fouquier saw in her nothing but an insignificant fille de joie who was monopolising his time. He cared not the slightest whether she were guilty or innocent, and by acquitting her it would not cost him any revenge, and would please the people.

"Citoyenne," he said, "I see no cause why you

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should suffer death. On the testimony of these honourable witnesses I accept your plea of drunkenness, and pronounce you innocent of any crime against the Republic. Let your imprisonment be a lesson to you. Take it well to heart. Do not abuse the generosity of the Republic ; learn to conduct yourself in an orderly manner ; avoid the vice of drink. See to what a pass it has brought you. Try to live an honest and respectable life, so that you may enjoy the benefits of this glorious revolution, which has emancipated all from thralldom and even lifts contempt from a fille de joie. Citoyenne, you are free."

This little moral lecture fell glibly from Fouquier's lips ; his words were received with applause. Eglée at once descended from the tribune, her head rather turned by her success. Two municipal guards advanced to escort her to the street, but she pushed them back and joined the mob penned behind their barrier of tricolor ribbon. The sansculottes and poissardes surrounded her, embracing her with shouts of "Vive la révolution !" and their rage of joy was as terrible to witness as their rage of hate.

The Duc d'Amboise had seen the way the Tribunal leaned towards Eglée, and that she knew it to be a loop-hole of escape through which she might crawl.

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But he did not understand her motive. The apathetic indifference he had haughtily assumed as his attitude to Fate was disturbed. He had turned his back on what of life was left him as a spoilt child, for since life would not run as he wished nothing it contained should attract his attention. Neither passion, nor dreams of what might have been, nor Fouquier and his tribunal, nor the guillotine, should cause a single nerve to quiver any more. The world had ended as far as he was concerned. Not even pity for the poor ignorant girl of the people should cause him a regret. So he had determined after the failure of the plot. If life was to go all wrong with him—well, then he would be callous. But there is always some unforeseen chance to upset the most consummately conceived mental pose. The Duc d'Amboise had never counted on the chance that Eglée might be faithless. Her effort to escape the death in the Place de la Révolution jarred him out of his indifference. She had no right to escape without him, and he felt the bitterness of one who has been subjected to treachery.

When his name was called he forced his way out of the stifled mass of victims and mounted the tribune. His pulse was beating regularly, but his lips smiled nervously, and his usually pale face was flushed. He was not afraid, but the humiliation was terrible, and

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he pitied himself. In a *coup d'œil* he realised the completeness of the Revolution as he had never done before. Could it be possible that the man standing in the tribune as abased as if he stood there naked was the same who, five years ago, had troops of friends and all the honour that wealth and birth could give him? The past seemed to have vanished as if by enchantment; it was the dream of a sorcerer, and never had any reality; *this* alone was real! Friends? One lost in the Sahara was not more abandoned. The news of his death when it reached Coblenz would excite no more regret than a mere "Poor d'Amboise!" from the lips of a royal personage; even a very *fille de joie* had forsaken him. There remained to him nothing but his high name, created five hundred years before by St. Louis, and to be forced to carry it to such an end as this was the crowning humiliation. He had but one thought, one desire, which was to die as quickly as possible, and so end the mockery of his life.

"You are charged with corrupting the municipal guard Boulet, instigating treachery against the Republic, and escaping from imprisonment. What have you to say in your defence? The slightest lie ruins you."

Fouquier's manner was insulting. This handsome,

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dissipated young man with the haughty and bored air was the aristocrat *par excellence*, a type to which Fouquier was especially hostile.

"Corrupting a jailer, escaping from prison, instigating treachery," replied the Duc d'Ambrose, slightly elevating his voice, and speaking in a tone of polite mockery, "all of which can be expressed in one word—namely, aristocrat. I plead guilty to the charge."

"You declare your own condemnation then," said Fouquier angrily.

The Duc d'Amboise inclined his head for answer. His manner irritated the people, it was as if he defied them. For a brief moment his eye regarded them indifferently, and, turning towards Fouquier, he said, loud enough for all to hear—

"End this farce."

Before Fouquier could go through his stereotyped formula of condemnation Eglée crept under the tricolor ribbon, against which she was squeezed in the press of sansculottes and poissardes, and standing in the centre of the court addressed herself to the jury, to whom she owed her own release, and in whom, if anywhere, lay mercy.

"Citizens," she cried, "as one of the people, the free people, in the name of the Republic, I beseech you spare this man's life! The freedom you have

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just given me is no freedom if you condemn him. Would you tear out my heart and set me free, of what use would your mercy be to me then? It would not be mercy, but torture, far more terrible than any you ever inflicted on the enemies of the Republic. Citizens, this man is my lover, life of my life—poor, mean thing that I am, I love him! The words that have fallen from his lips are the words of despair. He did not mean them; he believed his cause lost, and that any effort to free himself would be useless, and so in his humbled pride he wished to meet his doom more quickly. An aristocrat in name only, not in heart—oh, no! not in heart. He was an Emigré because he was forced to it by the tyrant Louis Capet. But he loves France, and rather than live in exile among the enemies of the people he came back to die on the soil of his dear country. He knew full well the risk, citizens, but no price was too high to pay. He is one of us, I say. He is a true patriot, not a royalist. Ask him, and he will tell you it is true. He never had a chance to prove it before. I swear to you he came back to Paris with information for Marat of the utmost value to the Republic; but Marat died that very day. Listen, and you will hear him say ‘Vive la révolution!’ and he will mean it. He denied it just now, citizens, because he was in the

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depth of despair. Emigré, aristocrat, not by his own will, but by the chance of birth. He has not a single friend in the wide world but me. They would not have him at Coblenz, they hunted him away, and in his misery he turned to France—dear Fatherland! Surely it will receive him with open arms, for he is a true patriot. It is generous, it is just. Oh, citizens, give him back to me, he is my all! Oh, give him back to me or send us both to the guillotine—I cannot, cannot live without him!”

Her words were uttered with the intensity of concentrated passion; not even in the Place de la Révolution had her wonderful voice sounded so sublime. She glanced quickly from the jury to Fouquier and then to the people who had before hailed her release with acclaim. The suddenness of her action and the wildness of her manner had surprised the entire Tribunal into silence till she finished. On Fouquier's cold and cruel face there was written hate; he did not mean to be balked of this insulting, arrogant aristocrat; the jury sat motionless and impassive, not daring to take the initiative, and watching for its cue from the sansculottes and poissardes. But the spasm of mercy that had seized them in Eglée's case had already passed, her passionate

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appeal fell on senses harder than granite; it made them but the harder. Who was she, indeed, to have for lover a man of the quality of this contemptuous aristocrat? She was a traitress to the people in loving him.

“To death with him!” cried frantic voices. “To death with the corrupter of jailers! To death with the conspirator! To death with the arch-aristocrat! To the guillotine with him!”

For a moment Eglée seemed dazed; she passed her hand over her face and stared blankly as if she were trying to recollect something. This reception gave her sublime state of mind a swift and painful recoil; she was stunned and lacerated as if she had been mangled on a jagged reef by the surf. Her appeal had not been the great *tour de force*, the shining triumph she had anticipated, and she vaguely realised that her acquittal had not been granted from sentiment at all. She had been set at liberty, not as one of the people falsely accused who had proved her staunch patriotism, but as a drunken, half-mad fille de joie, an insignificant creature with whom the Revolutionary Tribunal had no concern. And Eglée distinguished the difference.

Turning towards the people she stretched out her clasped hands, and pleaded again—

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"Ah, citizens, give him to me! He is my very heart! Ah, good people, be merciful, do not separate us! I love him so; give him to me—ah, give me the man I love!"

Her words were greeted with yells and obscene curses, and a poissarde spat at her. With the changed temper of the people the craven heart of Laforge gained courage and he too shouted lustily in the savage chorus.

"The fille de joie is a traitress, send her to the guillotine!" came the husky scream of Manette.

"To the guillotine with the aristocrat! Death to the oppressor of the people! Down with the enemy of the Republic!" shrieked the people till the words were indistinguishable in a babel of sound.

The Duc d'Amboise stood in the tribune, from which at every moment he expected to be dragged and butchered. He was very pale, but he still wore the undaunted air of contempt; it maddened the people like the scent of blood in the nostrils of wild beasts. He glanced at Fouquier with a faint, satirical smile as if the lack of order in the High Court of the Republic amused him. Fouquier caught the expression and bit his lips with rage; he jingled his bell and snarled out orders to the guard, but the Tribunal was turned into a pandemonium that was not to be easily quelled.

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Eglée once again appealed to the jury, she approached their bar and calling them by name besought them to save the Duc d'Amboise. But eloquence, sentiment, magnetic personality—all were lost on them; the magnetism of the infuriated mob was far more potent, they knew what the vengeance in the right arm of the people was like. Eglée made no more impression on them than a spoon in a viscid fluid. Jingle, jingle, went Fouquier's bell; impassive sat the jury; insane were the people, scarcely held back by the municipal guards from bursting the ribbon and inundating the Tribunal; terrified were the prisoners huddled together and remembering September. It was a scene frequent in the Terror—a court of justice in bedlam rather than that of a great free nation.

So occupied were the guards in holding the mob in check that Eglée's movements on the floor of the Tribunal met with no restraint. If she had a weapon in her hand she would most assuredly have slain Fouquier; the heartless ribaldry with which she was assailed was proof conclusive that her Herculean effort to save the man she loved was fruitless. The stormy sea was not less obedient than these people in their hunger for the head of the aristocrat. In despair she rushed to the tribune and flung herself at the feet of the Duc d'Amboise. He knew now that she had not

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erted him, he understood her reason for forswearing her loyalty to the old *régime*, and why she had wished to be acquitted. In such a frightful moment as this, when they were in the gravest danger of being torn limb from limb, what she had done appeared heroic; it thrilled him back into the earnestness she alone had ever been able to excite in him. He felt her power over him and he was deeply touched.

"Eglée," he cried, raising her and holding her in his arms, "you have squandered your freedom. I am not worth it."

"I only did what I could, M. le Duc," she answered. "All that I am is yours. Ah! there is no value in a *fille de joie* like me!"

"Eglée, Eglée!" he said, "your name shall be the last word I shall utter, your form, yourself, the last memory I shall hold!"

She answered nothing. Her despair vanished, driven wholly out of her by the divine spell of lying in his arms. Fouquier now rose from his seat and put on his hat as if he intended to leave the Tribunal. At once the rabble became still, he smiled at his power. Glancing angrily towards the people, he cried—

"Canaille! The Convention shall know of this degradation of its court. I shall procure an order from the Republic One and Indivisible to conduct the

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trials in secret. If my will is disobeyed the trial of these traitors shall not be continued. Do you understand? Guards, separate the prisoner in the tribune from that maniac. *Ci-devant* Duc d'Amboise, I condemn you to die by the guillotine this day as an enemy to France!" . .

"Courage, Eglée," whispered the Duc d'Amboise, as the guards approached, "go quietly, my girl; don't struggle, be brave!" .

The guards pulled her roughly from the tribune and held her between them by the wrists, waiting for an order from Fouquier to know what to do with her.

Indignation now got the better of her—it was beyond her power to control herself. Accustomed all her life to the savage freedom of speech of the Faubourg, which knew no conventionality or restriction and was absolutely without fear, Eglée struggled like a woman of the people that she was in the strong, resistless grip of the guards. Her face was distorted with rage, tears streamed from her eyes, and in a shrill, strident voice she cursed Fouquier.

"Dog of a tyrant that you are," she cried, "I fling your pardon in your face! I spurn the favour of the Republic! Down with the Revolution! I lied when I said I was drunk; I was not drunk, and I am not now! Down with the cursed man-eating Revolution!"

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Vive la reine ! I will die with it on my lips, the froth of it shall choke me ! Vive la reine ! ”

Her voice died away in her throat ; she panted for breath.

“ Eglée ! ” cried the Duc d’Amboise, “ Eglée ! It’s no use ; be calm, my girl ! ”

The sound of his voice acted like magic on her ; she turned her head behind her and looked at him steadfastly, as if the sight of him was the only remedy for the convulsion that rent her. And she became rigid and still. The sansculottes and poissardes, intimidated by the threat of Fouquier, remained speechless, wondering what he would do. For their part they knew what they would do if she left the Tribunal free. Drunk or mad, she should not live out the day.

In the stillness of the court the Duc d’Amboise descended from the tribune and was led away. Eglée’s eyes followed him yearningly ; she tried to speak, to call to him, but it was as though a band of iron was strangling her, and she could not. At the door Fouquier called to the guards to halt, and rising in his seat he began to speak. His imperturbable face gave no evidence of the cruel joy he felt. The aristocrat should drink the cup of degradation to the dregs ; he should not die before he had heard the

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doom of his mistress—a doom more terrible than his own.

“Woman,” he said, and Fouquier’s voice was studiously passionless, “woman, the Republic is merciful ; it knows how to make allowances for the ravings of a maniac. It acquits you of all intentional crime and treason against it, for it is not just to make a lunatic responsible for the actions done in delirium. Nor is it just to the people to expose them to dangers that may be averted. You are unconsciously ignorant of the peril your sad state of mind is to peaceful citizens. It is my duty to place you under restraint, where in spasms of insanity you will be harmless. No medical board is necessary to examine into the health of your brain ; your madness is only too apparent. I have no choice but to confine you strictly and alone to a cell in the Salpêtrière !”

There was a murmur of approval from the mob, but the frightful sentence fell unheeded on Eglée’s ears ; she was looking at the Duc d’Amboise, and unconscious of everything but him. . But to him the doom of this faithful girl, who had sacrificed herself for him, was monstrous ; it humbled his courage.

“Oh, my God !” he exclaimed, “have pity on her !”

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"Remove the prisoner," said Fouquier, waving his hand to the guards, who immediately obeyed the order.

As he passed out of the Tribunal the Duc d'Amboise turned to look back at Eglée for the last time, but the guards who held her obstructed his view. So she went out of his life as suddenly as she had come into it. In the street waited a tumbril in which some prisoners already condemned stood shivering in the cold November drizzle, while a mob at the doors of the Revolutionary Tribunal sang snatches of the Ça-ira and jested obscenely. The Duc d'Amboise took his place along with the others, and when its load was complete the tumbril lumbered slowly away.

In the meantime Eglée remained in the Tribunal like one in a trance, stunned with despair. As she was very quiet no more attention was paid to her; the interest of the court had passed on to other trials, which Fouquier and the jury now briskly despatched. Later on, after a discussion among the guards as to whether the mad woman should be conducted to the Salpêtrière on foot or in a *fiacre* at the expense of the Republic, Eglée was led out into the street and walked away between the guards to a solitary cell, to the very obliteration of all further trace of her.

She left the Tribunal docile enough, while Fouquier,

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jury, mob, prisoners, and guards, absorbed in the ferocious spectacle in which they played so intense a part, forgot her completely. A mere cinder in the huge conflagration, Eglée, like the great exploding sparks, had ignited, blazed up, and burnt out.

The ashes of history repose not in mausoleums, but in oubliettes.

THE END.

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